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THE PERSON OF CHRIST

PHILIP SCHAFF, D. D., LL.D.

THE
PERSON OF CHRIST

HIS PERFECT HUMANITY
A PROOF OF HIS DIVINITY

WITH IMPARTIAL TESTIMONIES
TO HIS CHARACTER

By
PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D., LL.D.

WITH A FOREWORD BY
REV. CORTLAND MYERS, D.D.

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FOREWORD

The one interrogation pushing its way persistently into the hearts and minds of men is—"What think ye of Christ?" From this center move out the radii through every part of the theological world. It is the heart from which the veins and arteries of all Christian faith draw their life. This is the question of history, the question of the Bible, the question of the Church, the question of theology, the question of Christianity. A clear, concise and convincing answer is given to the world in the pages of this volume.

No man can afford to miss from his library or his life the ripened fruit of Dr. Schaff's mind. He has entered the Holy of Holies, and brought back to his fellow-men a divine message. He has replaced the sand of skepticism by the solid rock of Faith. He has shown that the central miracle of history is Christ Himself, that He is the divine-human Saviour, that in this fact Christianity securely rests.

For the man who desires to know Christ and desires to be more like Him, and desires to lead others to Him, this book is one of God's choicest gifts.

CORTLAND MYERS.

TREMONT TEMPLE, BOSTON, MASS.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

With the consent of Professor David S. Schaff, of the Western Theological Seminary, Pittsburgh, Pa., literary executor of Philip Schaff, the American Tract Society has abbreviated the original work as it appeared from the hand of Dr. Schaff in 1865 and 1883. Some testimonies there given have been omitted, and critical notes, as far as retained, have been transferred for purposes of ready reference from the end of the volume to the pages where they belong. The tables of contents at the head of the chapters are new.

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PREFACE

"What do ye think of the Son of Man?" This is the religious question of the age. The result of the renewed struggle cannot be doubtful: in all theological controversies, truth is the gainer in the end. Though nailed to the cross and buried in the tomb, it rises again triumphant over error, taking captivity captive, and changing at times even a bitter foe, like Saul of Tarsus, into a devoted friend. Goethe says: "The conflict of faith and unbelief remains the proper, the only, the deepest theme of the history of the world and mankind, to which all others are subordinated." This very conflict centers in the Christological problem.

The question of Christ is the question of Christianity, which is the manifestation of his life in the world; it is the question of the Church, which rests upon him as the immovable rock; it is the question of history, which revolves around him as the sun of the moral universe: it is the question of every man who instinctively yearns after him as the object of his noblest and purest aspirations; it is a question of personal salvation, which can only be obtained through Jesus. The whole fabric of Christianity stands or falls with its divine-human Founder; and if it can never perish, it is because Christ lives, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

The object of this book is to show that the Person of Christ is the great central miracle of history, and the strongest evidence of Christianity. The very perfection

of his humanity is a proof of his Divinity. The indwelling of God in him is the only satisfactory explanation of his amazing character.

Standing on this rock, we may feel safe against the attacks of infidelity. The Person of Christ is to me the surest as well as the most sacred of all facts; as certain as my own personal existence; yea, even more so: for Christ lives in me, and he is the only valuable part of my existence. I am nothing without my Saviour; I am all with him, and would not exchange him for the whole world. To give up faith in Christ is to give up faith in humanity; to believe in him is to believe in the redemption and final glorification of men; and this faith is the best inspiration to a holy and useful life for the good of our race and the glory of God.

P. S.

THE PERSON OF CHRIST

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. **THE LIFE AND CHARACTER OF CHRIST.** Christ's name above every name. Yet thought and argument needed.
2. **FAITH AND KNOWLEDGE COMPLEMENTARY.** Central place of doctrine of Christ. The principle of genuine Protestantism.
3. **TWO METHODS OF SHOWING CHRIST'S GODHEAD.** (1) From the divine to the human. (2) From the human to the divine. The second method used here. It is in line with present tendencies.
4. **CHRIST'S HUMAN PERSONAL CHARACTER.** Perfect in the midst of an imperfect world. Honest inquirers find the truth.

When the angel of the Lord appeared to Moses in the burning bush, he was commanded to put off his shoes from his feet; for the place whereon he stood was holy ground. With what reverence and awe, then, should we approach the contemplation of the great reality—God manifest in the flesh—of which the vision of Moses was but a significant type and shadow!

1. The Life and Character of Jesus Christ is the holy of holies in the history of the world. Eighteen centuries have passed away since he appeared, in the fulness of time, on this earth to redeem a fallen race from sin and death, and to open a never-ceasing fountain of

righteousness and life. The ages before him anxiously awaited his coming, as the fulfillment of the desire of all nations; the ages after him proclaim his glory, and ever extend his dominion. The noblest and best of men under every clime hold him not only in the purest affection and the profoundest gratitude, but in divine adoration and worship. His name is above every name that may be named in heaven or on earth, and the only one whereby sinners can be saved. He is the Author of the new creation; the Way, the Truth, and the Life; the Prophet, Priest, and King of regenerate humanity. He is Immanuel, God with us; the Eternal Word become flesh; very God and very man in one undivided person, the Saviour of the world.

Thus he stands out to the faith of the entire Christian Church—Greek, Latin, and Evangelical—in every civilized country on the globe. Much as the various confessions and denominations differ in doctrines and usages, they are agreed in their love and adoration of Jesus. They lay down their arms when they approach the manger of Bethlehem where he was born, or the cross of Calvary where he died for our sins that we might live forever in heaven. He is the divine harmony of all human sects and creeds, the common life-center of all true Christians; where their hearts meet with their affections, prayers, and hopes, in spite of the discord of their heads. The doctrines and institutions, the sciences and arts of Christendom, bear witness to the indelible impression he made upon the world; countless churches and cathedrals are as many monuments of gratitude to his holy name; hymns and prayers are daily and hourly ascending to his praise from public and private sanctuaries in all parts of the globe. His power is now greater, his kingdom larger, than ever; and it will continue to

spread, until all nations shall bow before him and kiss his scepter of righteousness and peace.

Blessed is he who from the heart can believe that Jesus is the Son of God, and the fountain of salvation. True faith is an act of God wrought in the soul by the Holy Spirit, who reveals Christ to us in his true character, as Christ has revealed the Father. Faith, with its justifying, sanctifying, and saving power, is independent of science and learning, and may be kindled even in the heart of a little child. It is the peculiar glory of the Redeemer and his religion to be coextensive with humanity itself, without distinction of sex, age, nation, or race. His saving grace flows and overflows to all and for all, on the simple condition of faith.

This fact, however, does not supersede the necessity of thought and argument. Revelation, although above nature and above reason, is not against nature or against reason. On the contrary, nature and the supernatural, as has been well said by a distinguished New England divine, "constitute together the one system of God." [1] Christianity satisfies the deepest intellectual as well as moral wants of man, who is created in the image and for the glory of God. It is the revelation of truth as well as of life.

2. Faith and Knowledge are not antagonistic, but complementary forces; not enemies, but inseparable twin sisters. Faith precedes knowledge, but just as necessarily it leads to knowledge; while true knowledge, on the other hand, is always rooted and grounded in faith, and tends to confirm and to strengthen it. Thus we find the two combined in the famous confession of Peter, when he says, in the name of all the other apostles: "We

[1] Horace Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural.*

believe and we *know* that thou art the Christ."[2] So intimately are both connected, that we may also reverse the famous maxim of Augustine, Anselm, and Schleiermacher, "Faith precedes knowledge," and say, "Knowledge precedes faith." For how can we believe in any object without at least some general historical knowledge of its existence and character? Faith even in its first form, as a submission to the authority of God and an assent to the truth of his revelation, is an exercise of the mind and reason as well as of the heart and the will. Hence faith has been defined as implying three things,—knowledge, assent, and trust or confidence. An idiot or a madman cannot believe. Our religion demands a rational, intelligent faith; and this, just in proportion to its strength and fervor, aims at an ever-deepening insight into its own sacred contents and object.

As living faith in Christ is the soul of all sound practical Christianity and piety, so the true doctrine of Christ is the soul and center of all sound Christian theology. St. John makes the denial of the incarnation of the Son of God the criterion of Antichrist, and consequently the belief in this truth the test of Christianity. The incarnation of the eternal Logos, and the divine glory shining through the veil of Christ's humanity, is the grand theme of his Gospel, which he wrote with the pen of an angel from the very heart of Christ, as his favorite disciple and bosom friend. The Apostles' Creed, starting as it does from the confession of Peter, makes the article on Christ most prominent, and assigns to it the central position between the preceding article on God the Father, and the succeeding article on the Holy

[2] John 6:69—"We have believed and know." The reverse order we have in John 10:38: "That ye may know and believe that the Father is in me, and I in him;" and in 1 John 5:13.

Ghost. The development of ancient Catholic theology commenced and culminated with the triumphant defense of the true divinity and true humanity of Christ against the opposite heresies of Judaizing Ebionism, which denied the former, and paganizing Gnosticism, which resolved the latter into a shadowy phantom. Evangelical theology is essentially Christological, or controlled throughout by the proper idea of Christ as the God-Man and Saviour. This is emphatically the article of the standing or falling Church. In this, the two most prominent ideas of the Reformation—the doctrine of the supremacy of the Scriptures, and the doctrine of justification by grace through faith—meet, and are vitally united. Christ's word, the only unerring and efficient guide of truth; Christ's work, the only unfailing and sufficient source of peace; Christ all in all,—this is the principle of genuine Protestantism.

3. Two Methods of Showing Christ's Godhead.— In the construction of the true doctrine of Christ's person, we may, with St. John in the prologue to his Gospel, begin from above with his eternal Godhead, and proceed, through the creation and the preparatory revelation of the Old Testament economy, till we reach the incarnation and his truly human life for the redemption of the race. Or, with the other Evangelists, we may begin from below with his birth from the Virgin Mary, and rise, through the successive stages of his earthly life, his discourses and miracles, to his assumption into that divine glory which he had before the foundation of the world. The result reached in both cases is the same, namely: that Christ unites in his person the whole fulness of the Godhead, and the whole fulness of sinless manhood.

The older theologians, both Catholic and Evangelical, proved the divinity of the Saviour in a direct

way from the *miracles* performed by him; from the *prophecies* and *types* fulfilled in him; from the divine *names* which he bears; from the divine *attributes* which are predicated of him; from the divine *works* which he performed; and from the divine *honors* which he claims, and which are fully accorded to him by his apostles and the whole Christian Church to this day.

But the divinity of Christ may also be proved by the opposite process,—the contemplation of the singular perfection of his humanity; which rises by almost universal consent, even of unbelievers, so far above every human greatness known before or since, that it can only be rationally explained on the ground of such an essential union with the Godhead as he claimed himself, and as his inspired apostles ascribed to him. The more deeply we penetrate the veil of his flesh, the more clearly we behold the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father shining through the same, full of grace and of truth.

Modern theology owes this new homage to the Saviour. The powerful and subtle attacks of the latest phases of infidelity upon the credibility of the gospel history call for a more vigorous defense than was ever made before, and have already led, by way of reaction, to new triumphs of the old faith of the Church in her divine Head.

Our humanitarian, philanthropic, and yet skeptical age is more open to this argument, which proceeds from the humanity to the divinity, than to the old dogmatic method of demonstration which follows the opposite process. With Thomas, the representative of honest and earnest skepticism among the apostles, many noble and inquiring minds refuse to believe in the divinity of the Lord unless supported by convincing arguments of reason: they desire to put the finger into the print of the

nails, and to thrust the hand into his side, before they exclaim, in humble adoration: "My Lord and my God!" They cannot easily be brought to believe in miracles on abstract reasoning or on historical evidence. But, if they once could see the great moral miracle of Christ's person and character, they would have no difficulty with his miraculous works. For a superhuman being must of necessity do superhuman deeds. The contrary would be unnatural, and the greatest miracle. The character of the tree accounts for the character of the fruit. We believe in the miracles of Christ because we believe in his person as the divine Man and the central miracle of the moral universe.

4. Christ's Human Personal Character.—It is from this point of view that we shall endeavor to analyze and exhibit the *human character* of Christ. We propose to take up the man, Jesus of Nazareth, as he appears on the simple, unsophisticated record of the honest fishermen of Galilee, and as he lives in the faith of Christendom; and we shall find him in all the stages of his life, both as a private individual and as a public character, so far elevated above the reach of successful rivalry, and so singularly perfect, that this very perfection, in the midst of an imperfect and sinful world, constitutes an irresistible proof of his divinity.

A full discussion of the subject would require us to consider Christ in his official as well as personal character; and to describe him as a teacher, a reformer, a worker of miracles, and the founder of a spiritual kingdom universal in extent and perpetual in time. From every point of view, we should be irresistibly driven to the same result. But our present purpose confines us to the consideration of his personal character; and this alone, we think, is sufficient for the conclusion.

Infidels, it is true, are seldom converted by argument; for the springs of unbelief are in the heart and will rather than in the head. But honest and truth-loving inquirers, like Nathanael and Thomas, will never refuse, on proper evidence, to receive the truth.

Blessed are they that seek the truth; for they shall find it.

CHAPTER II

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH

5. **INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD.** Christ comes before us as a child. Combination of humility and grandeur. Yet no unnatural prodigy. Ennobling influence of the Christ-child at Christmas.
6. **BOYHOOD.** Scene at twelve in the Temple. Contrast of the pseudo-gospels.

Jesus passed through all the stages of human life from infancy to manhood, and represented each in its ideal form, that he might redeem and sanctify them all, and be a perpetual model for imitation. He was the model infant, the model boy, the model youth, and the model man.[3] But the weakness, decline, and decrepitude of old age would be incompatible with his character and mission as the Regenerator of the race and Prince of life. He died and rose in the full bloom of early manhood, and lives in the hearts of his people in unfading freshness and unbroken vigor forever.

5. Infancy and Childhood.—Let us first glance at the *infancy* and *childhood* of Jesus. The history of the race commences with the beauty of innocent youth in the garden of Eden, "when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy," in

[3] This idea is almost as old as the Christian Church, and was already taught by Irenæus, who, through the single link of his teacher Polycarp, stood connected with the age of St. John the apostle.

beholding Adam and Eve created in the image of their Maker,—the crowning glory of all his wonderful works. So the second Adam, the Redeemer of the fallen race, the Restorer and Perfecter of man, comes first before us in the accounts of the Gospels as a child, born, not in Paradise, it is true, but among the dreary ruins of sin and death; from a humble virgin, in a lowly manger, yet pure and innocent,—the subject of the praise of angels and the adoration of men. Even the announcement and expectation of his birth transforms his virgin mother, the bride of the humble carpenter, into an inspired prophetess and poetess; rejuvenates the aged parents of the Baptist in hopeful anticipation of the approaching salvation; and makes the unborn babe leap in Elisabeth's womb,—the babe who was to prepare the way for his coming. The immortal psalms of Elisabeth, Mary, and Zacharias combine the irresistible charms of poetry with truth, and are a worthy preparation for the actual appearance of the Christ-child, at the very threshold of the gospel salvation, when the highest poetry was to become reality, and reality to surpass the sublimest ideal of poetry.[4] And, when the heavenly child was born, heaven and earth, the shepherds of Bethlehem in the name of Israel longing after salvation, and the wise men from the East as the representatives of heathenism in its dark groping after the "unknown God," unite in the worship of the infant King and Saviour.

Here we meet, at the very beginning of the earthly history of Christ, that singular combination of humility and grandeur, of simplicity and sublimity, of the human and divine, which characterizes it throughout, and dis-

[4] See Luke 1:41-45; the *Magnificat*, or the Virgin's Song, vers. 46-55; the *Benedictus*, or the Song of Zacharias, vers. 67-79.

tinguishes it from every other history. He appears in the world first as a child, as a poor child, in one of the smallest towns of a remote country,[5] in one of the lowliest spots of that town, in a stable, in a manger, a helpless fugitive from the wrath of a cruel tyrant,—thus presenting, at first sight, every stumbling-block to our faith. But, on the other hand, the appearance of the angel, the inspired hymns of Zacharias and Mary, the holy exultation of Elisabeth, Anna, and Simeon, the prophecies of Scripture, the theological lore of the scribes at Jerusalem, even the dark political suspicion of Herod, the star of Bethlehem, the journey of the Magi from the distant East, the dim light of astrology, the significant night-vision of Joseph, and God's providence overruling every event,—form a glorious array of evidences for the divine origin of the Christ-child. Heaven and earth seem to move around him as their center. What a contrast! A child in the manger, yet bearing the salvation of the world; a child hated and feared, yet longed for and loved; a child poor and despised, yet honored and adored,—beset by danger, yet marvelously preserved; a child setting the stars in heaven, the city of Jerusalem, the shepherds of Judæa, and the sages of the East in motion,—attracting the best elements of the world, and repelling all that is dark and evil! This conception is too deep, too sublime, too significant, to be the invention of illiterate fishermen.

Yet, with all these marks of divinity upon him, the infant Saviour is not represented, either by Matthew or Luke, as an unnatural prodigy, anticipating the matu-

[5] Bethlehem was indeed the ancestral seat of the house of David (Ruth 1:1, 2), but remained an insignificant place, and is not even mentioned among the towns of Judah in the Hebrew text of Joshua, nor in Neh. 11:25.

rity of a later age, but as a truly human child, silently lying and smiling on the bosom of his virgin mother; "growing" and "waxing strong in spirit," [6] and therefore subject to the law of regular development, though differing from all other children by his supernatural conception and perfect freedom from hereditary sin and guilt. He appears in the celestial beauty of unspotted innocence, a veritable flower of paradise. He was "that Holy Thing," according to the announcement of the angel Gabriel (Luke 1: 35), admired and loved by all who approached him in a childlike spirit, but exciting the dark suspicion of the tyrant king who represented his future enemies and persecutors.

Who can measure the ennobling, purifying, and cheering influence which proceeds from the contemplation of the Christ-child, at each returning Christmas season, upon the hearts of young and old in every land and nation! The loss of the first estate is richly compensated by the undying innocence of paradise regained.

6. **Boyhood.**—Of the *boyhood* of Jesus we know only one fact, recorded by Luke; but it is in perfect keeping with the peculiar charm of his childhood, and foreshadows at the same time the glory of his public life as one uninterrupted service of his heavenly Father. When twelve years old, we find him in the Temple, in the midst of the Jewish doctors; not teaching and offending them by any immodesty or forwardness, but hearing and asking questions: thus actually learning from them, and yet filling them with astonishment at his understanding and answers. There is nothing premature, forced, or unbecoming his age, and yet a degree of wisdom and an

[6] Luke 2:40, "And the child grew and waxed strong in spirit;" precisely the same expression which Luke used, 1:80, of John the Baptist.

intensity of interest in religion which rises far above a purely human youth. "He increased," we are told, "in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man" (Luke 2:52). He was subject to his parents, and practised all the virtues of an obedient son; and yet he filled them with a sacred awe as they saw him absorbed in "the things of his Father," [7] and heard him utter words which they were unable to understand at the time, but which Mary treasured up in her heart as a holy secret, convinced that they must have some deep meaning answering to the mystery of his supernatural conception and birth.

Such an idea of a harmless and faultless heavenly childhood, of a growing, inquiring, and yet surprisingly wise boyhood, as it meets us in living reality at the portal of the gospel history, never entered the imagination of biographer, poet, or philosopher before. On the contrary, as has been justly observed,[8] "in all the higher ranges of character, the excellence portrayed is never the simple unfolding of a harmonious and perfect beauty contained in the germ of childhood, but is a character formed by a process of rectification in which many follies are mended and distempers removed; in which confidence is checked by defeat, passion moderated by reason, smartness sobered by experience. Commonly a certain pleasure is taken in showing how the many wayward sallies of the boy are, at length, reduced by discipline to the character of wisdom, justice, and public heroism so much admired. Besides, if any writer, of almost any age, will undertake to describe, not merely a spotless but a superhuman or celestial childhood, not having the reality before him, he must be

[7] See Luke 2:49, R. V. margin.
[8] Horace Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural*, p. 280.

somewhat more than human himself if he does not pile together a mass of clumsy exaggerations; and draw and overdraw, till neither heaven nor earth can find any verisimilitude in the picture."

This unnatural exaggeration, into which the mythical fancy of man, in its endeavor to produce a superhuman childhood and boyhood, will inevitably fall, is strikingly exhibited in the myth of Hercules, who, while yet a suckling in the cradle, squeezed two monster serpents to death with his tender hands; and still more in the accounts of the apocryphal Gospels on the prodigious performances of the infant Saviour. These apocryphal Gospels are related to the canonical Gospels as a counterfeit to the genuine coin, or as a caricature to the inimitable original; but, by the very contrast, they tend, negatively, to corroborate the truth of the evangelical history. The strange contrast has been frequently urged, especially in the Strauss-controversy, and used as an argument against the mythical theory. While the Evangelists expressly reserve the performance of miracles to the age of maturity and public life, and observe a significant silence concerning the parents of Jesus, the pseudo-evangelists fill the infancy and early years of the Saviour and his mother with the strangest prodigies, and make the active intercession of Mary very prominent throughout. According to their representation, even dumb idols, irrational beasts, and senseless trees bow in adoration before the infant Jesus on his journey to Egypt; and after his return, when yet a boy of five or seven years, he changes balls of clay into flying birds for the idle amusement of his playmates, strikes terror round about him, dries up a stream of water by a mere word, transforms his companions into goats, raises the dead to life, and performs all sorts of miraculous

cures through a magical influence which proceeds from the very water in which he was washed, the towels which he used, and the bed on which he slept.

Here we have the falsehood and absurdity of unnatural fiction; while the New Testament presents to us the truth and beauty of a supernatural yet most real history, which shines out only in brighter colors by the contrast of the mythical shadow.

CHAPTER III

TRAINING

7. **WITHOUT ADVANTAGE OF SCHOOLS OR LARGE INFLUENCES.** Humble location at Nazareth. No natural cause for final result.
8. **CONTRAST WITH LUTHER AND SHAKESPEARE.** Luther the son of poor peasants. But he had schools, professors, libraries. Shakespeare, a Warwickshire youth. Yet had access to books and lived in London.
9. **CHRIST'S INDEPENDENT AUTHORITY.** Christ acquainted with only the Old Testament. He confined himself strictly to religion. Yet sheds light over whole world of man and nature. Speaks from divine intuition and *is* the truth. Has an authority that commands attention.

With the exception of these few significant hints, the youth of Jesus, and the preparation for his public ministry, are enshrined in mysterious silence. But we know the outward condition and circumstances under which he grew up; and these furnish no explanation for the astounding results, without the admission of the supernatural and divine element in his life.

7. Without Advantage of Schools or Large Influences.—Jesus lived among a people who are seldom and only contemptuously named by the ancient classics, and were subjected at the time to the yoke of a foreign oppressor. He grew up in a remote and conquered province of the Roman Empire; in the darkest district of Palestine; in a country town of proverbial insignifi-

cance. He spent his youth in poverty and manual labor, in the obscurity of a carpenter's shop; far away from universities, academies, libraries, and literary or polished society. He had no opportunities, except the parental care, the daily wonders of nature, the Old Testament Scriptures, the weekly Sabbath services of the synagogue (Luke 4: 16), the annual festivals in Jerusalem (Luke 2: 42), and the secret intercourse of his soul with God. These are indeed the great educators of the mind and heart. The book of Nature and the book of Revelation are filled with richer and more important lessons than all the works of human art and learning; but they were accessible alike to every Jew, and gave no advantage to Jesus over his humblest neighbor.

Hence the question of Nathanael: "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" Hence the natural surprise of the Jews, who knew all his human relations and antecedents. "How knoweth this man letters," they asked when they heard Jesus teach, "having never learned?" (John 7: 15.) And on another occasion, when he taught in the synagogue: "Whence hath this man this wisdom and these mighty works? Is not this the carpenter's son? Is not his mother Mary? and his brethren, James and Joses and Simon and Judas? And his sisters—are they not all with us? Whence, then, hath this man all these things?" [9] These questions are unavoidable and unanswerable, if Christ be regarded as a mere man; for each effect presupposes a corresponding cause.

The difficulty here presented can by no means be solved by a reference to the fact that many, perhaps the majority of great men, have risen, by their own

[9] Matt. 13: 54-56. Compare also Mark 6: 3.

industry and perseverance, from the lower walks of life, and from a severe contest with poverty and obstacles of every kind. The fact itself is readily conceded; but, in every one of these cases, schools and books, or patrons and friends, or peculiar events and influences, can be pointed out as auxiliary aids in the development of intellectual or moral greatness. There is always some human and natural cause, or combination of causes, which accounts for the final result.

8. Contrast with Luther and Shakespeare.—Luther, for instance, was indeed the son of poor peasants, and had a very hard youth: but he went to the schools of Mansfeld, Magdeburg, and Eisenach; to the university of Erfurt; passed through the ascetic discipline of convent life; studied and labored among professors, students, and libraries; and was innocently, as it were, made a reformer by extraordinary events, and the irresistible current of his age.

Shakespeare is generally and justly regarded as the most remarkable and most wonderful example of a self-taught man; who, without the regular routine of school education, became the greatest dramatic poet, not only of his age and country, but of all times. But the absurd idea that the son of the Warwickshire yeoman or butcher or glover—we hardly know which—was essentially an unlearned man, and jumped with one bound from the youthful folly of deer-stealing to the highest position in literature, has long since been abandoned by competent judges. It is certain that he spent several years in the free grammar-school of Stratford-on-Avon, where he probably acquired the "small Latin, and less Greek," which, however small in the eyes of so profound a classical scholar as Ben Jonson, was certainly large enough to unfold to him a general under-

standing of Greek and Roman antiquity. And, whatever were the defects of his scholastic training, he must have made them up, by intense private study of books, and the closest observation of men and things: for his dramas—the occasional chronological, historical, and geographical mistakes notwithstanding, which are small matters at all events, and in most cases, as in "Pericles" and in "Midsummer-Night's Dream," either intentional, or mere freaks of fancy—abound in the most accurate and comprehensive knowledge of human nature under all its types and conditions,—in the cold North and the sunny South; in the fifteenth century, and at the time of Cæsar, under the influence of Christianity and of Judaism,—together with a great variety of historical and other information, which cannot be acquired without study, and the help of oral or printed instruction. Moreover, he lived in the city of London; united the offices of actor, manager, and writer, in the classic age of Elizabeth, in the company of genial and gifted friends, with free access to the highest ranks of blood, wealth, and wit, and during the closing scenes of the greatest upheaving of the human mind which ever took place since the introduction of Christianity.

9. Christ's Independent Authority.—In the case of Christ, no such natural explanation can be given. He can be ranked neither with school-trained, nor with self-trained or self-made men; if by the latter we understand, as we must, those who, without the regular aid of *living* teachers, yet with the same educational *means*, such as books, the observation of men and things, and the intense application of their mental faculties, attained to vigor of intellect, and wealth of scholarship,—like Shakespeare, Jacob Boehm, Benjamin Franklin, and others. The attempts to bring him into contact with

Egyptian wisdom, or the Essenic theosophy, or other sources of learning, are without a shadow of proof, and explain nothing after all. He never quotes from books, except the Old Testament. He never refers to secular history, poetry, rhetoric, mathematics, astronomy, foreign languages, natural sciences, discoveries and inventions, or any of those branches of knowledge which make up human learning and literature. He confined himself strictly to religion. But, from that center, he sheds light over the whole world of man and nature, and acts as a universal inspirer of higher and purer thought. In this department, unlike all other great men, even the prophets and the apostles, he is absolutely original and independent. He teaches the world as one who had learned nothing from it, and is under no obligation to it. He speaks from divine intuition, as one who not only *knows* the truth, but *is* the truth; and with an authority that commands absolute submission, or provokes rebellion, but can never be passed by with contempt or indifference. "His character and life were originated and sustained in spite of circumstances with which no earthly force could have contended, and therefore must have had their real foundation in a force which was preternatural and divine." [10]

At the same time, it is easy to see, from the admission of Christ's divinity, that by this condescension he raised humble origin, poverty, manual labor, and the lower orders of society, to a dignity and sacredness never known before. He set up the true standard of judging men and things not from their outward appearance, but from their intrinsic merits.

[10] John Young, *The Christ of History,* p. 35.

CHAPTER IV

PUBLIC LIFE

10. **FRESH AND ORIGINAL TEACHING.** Christ did all in the fresh vigor of early manhood. His gospel never wearies nor is exhausted. Tributes of Napoleon and Ewald.
11. **WISDOM AND MODERATION.** The triennium of his ministry has boundless historic meaning. Contrast of Alexander's career.
12. **HUMBLE, QUIET BEARING.** He moved in the circle of every-day life. Selected disciples from the lowly.
13. **IMMEASURABLE SUCCESS AND GREATNESS.** Christ produces incalculable effects. He now controls the destinies of the civilized world. An unsolvable problem unless he is the Son of God.

We now approach the public life of Jesus. In his thirtieth year, after the Messianic inauguration through the baptism by John as his forerunner, and as the representative of the Old Covenant, both in its legal and prophetic or evangelical aspects, and after the Messianic probation by the temptation in the wilderness,—the counterpart of the temptation of the first Adam in paradise,—he entered upon his great work.

10. Fresh and Original Teaching.—His public life lasted only three years; and before he had reached the age of ordinary maturity he died, in the full beauty and vigor of early manhood, without tasting the infirmities of declining years. He retained the dew of his youth upon him: he never became an old man. Both his person and his work, every word he spoke, and every

act he performed, have the freshness, brilliance, and vigor of youth, and will retain them to the end of time. All other things fade away; every book of man loses its interest after repeated reading: but the gospel of Jesus never wearies; it becomes more interesting the more it is read, and grows deeper at every attempt to fathom its depth. Even Napoleon is reported to have said on St. Helena, pointing to a copy of the Testament on his table: "I never tire with reading it, and I read it daily with equal delight. The gospel is not a book, but a living power which overwhelms every opposing force. The soul which is captivated by the beauty of the gospel does no more belong to itself or to the world, but to God. What an evidence is this of the divinity of Christ!" The great Orientalist, Henry Ewald, holding a Greek Testament in his hand, said to a friend: "In this little book is contained the whole wisdom of the world."

11. Wisdom and Moderation.—And yet, unlike all other men of his years, Christ combined, with the freshness, energy, and originating power of youth, that wisdom, moderation, and experience, which belong only to mature age. The short triennium of his public ministry contains more, even from a purely historical point of observation, than the longest life of the greatest and best of men. It is pregnant with the deepest meaning of the counsel of God and the destiny of the race. It is the ripe fruit of all preceding ages, the fulfilment of the hopes and desires of the Jewish and heathen mind, and the fruitful germ of succeeding generations. It contains the impulse to the purest thoughts and noblest actions down to the end of time. It is "the end of a boundless past, the center of a boundless present, and the beginning of a boundless future."

How remarkable, how wonderful, this contrast between the short duration and the immeasurable significance of Christ's ministry! The Saviour of the world a youth!

Other men require a long succession of years to mature their mind and character, and to make a lasting impression upon the world. There are exceptions, we admit. Alexander the Great, the last and most brilliant efflorescence of the ancient Greek nationality, died a young man of thirty-three, after having conquered the East to the borders of the Indus. But who would think of comparing an ambitious warrior, conquered by his own lust, and dying a victim of his passion, with the spotless Friend of sinners? a few bloody victories of the one with the peaceful triumphs of the other; and a huge military empire of force, which crumbled to pieces as soon as it was erected, with the spiritual kingdom of truth and love which stands to this day, and will last forever? Nor should it be forgotten that the true significance and only value of Alexander's conquest lay beyond the horizon of his ambition and intention; and that by carrying the language and civilization of Greece to Asia, and bringing together the Oriental and Occidental world, it prepared the way for the introduction of the universal religion of Christ, who occupies the central position in history, all the preceding ages looking toward him as the fulfilment of their hopes and aspirations, all succeeding ages starting from him to carry out the design of his coming. Napoleon, in his conversations with General Bertrand at St. Helena, made the striking remark: "The world admires the conquest of Alexander; but Christ is a conqueror who attracts, unites to himself, and incorporates with him, for its own benefit, not a nation,—no, but the whole human race.

What a miracle! The human soul, with all its faculties, becomes an annex to the existence of Christ."

12. Humble, Quiet Bearing.—There is another striking distinction of a general character, between Christ and the heroes of history, which we must notice here. We should naturally suppose that such an uncommon personage, setting up the most astounding claims and proposing the most extraordinary work, would surround himself with extraordinary circumstances, and maintain a position far above the vulgar and degraded multitude around him. We should expect something uncommon and striking in his look, his dress, his manner, his mode of speech, his outward life, and the train of his attendants.

But the very reverse is the case. His greatness is singularly unostentatious, modest, and quiet; and, far from repelling the beholder, it attracts and invites him to familiar approach. His public life never moved on the imposing arena of secular heroism, but within the humble circle of every-day life, and the simple relations of a son, a brother, a citizen, a teacher, and a friend. We have no authentic description of his "human face divine;" he had not the physiognomy of a sinner, and "the glory of the only Begotten of the Father full of grace and truth" must have shone through the veil of his flesh, but it was perceptible only to a deeper penetration, and his outward dress and appearance, if we are to judge from the absence of all observations on the subject, had nothing startling or uncommon. He had no army to command, no kingdom to rule, no prominent station to fill, no worldly favors and rewards to dispense. He was a humble individual, without friends and patrons in the Sanhedrin or at the court of Herod. He never mingled in familiar intercourse with the religious or

social leaders of the nation, whom he had startled in his twelfth year by his questions and answers. He selected his disciples from among the illiterate fishermen of Galilee, and promised them no reward in this world but a part in the bitter cup of his sufferings. He dined with publicans and sinners, and mingled with the common people, without ever condescending to their low manners and habits. He was so poor that he had no place on which to rest his head. He depended, for the supply of his modest wants, on the voluntary contributions of a few pious women; and the purse was in the hands of a thief and a traitor. Nor had he learning, art, or eloquence, in the usual sense of the term, or any other kind of power by which great men arrest the attention and secure the admiration of the world. The writers of Greece and Rome were ignorant even of his existence, until, several years after the crucifixion, the effects of his mission, in the steady growth of the sect of his followers, forced from them some contemptuous notice, and then roused them to opposition.

13. **Immeasurable Success and Greatness.**—And yet this Jesus of Nazareth, without money and arms, conquered more millions than Alexander, Cæsar, Mohammed, and Napoleon; without science and learning, he shed more light on things human and divine than all philosophers and scholars combined; without the eloquence of schools, he spoke such words of life as were never spoken before or since, and produced effects which lie beyond the reach of orator or poet; without writing a single line, he set more pens in motion, and furnished themes for more sermons, orations, discussions, learned volumes, works of art, and songs of praise, than the whole army of great men of ancient and modern times. Born in a manger, and crucified as a malefactor, he

now controls the destinies of the civilized world, and rules a spiritual empire which embraces one third of the inhabitants of the globe. There never was in this world a life so unpretending, modest, and lowly in its outward form and condition, and yet producing such extraordinary effects upon all ages, nations, and classes of men. The annals of history furnish no other example of such complete and astounding success, in spite of the absence of those material, social, literary, and artistic powers and influences which are indispensable to success for a mere man. Christ stands, in this respect also, solitary and alone among all the heroes of history, and presents to us an unsolvable problem, unless we admit him to be more than man, even the eternal Son of God.

We will now attempt to describe his personal or moral and religious character as it appears in the record of his public life, and then examine his own testimony of himself as giving us the only rational solution of this mighty problem.

CHAPTER V

FREEDOM FROM SIN

14. **SUBJECT TO TEMPTATION.** Tempted, but never yielding. Real freedom, or the power of choice.
15. **FULLY RESISTING TEMPTATION.** Christ's relative sinlessness became absolute sinlessness. He attained a moral impossibility of sinning.
16. **A SINLESS RECORD.** He shows no wrong or sin. He is positively just and holy.
17. **HE WAS CONSCIOUSLY SINLESS.**
18. **THE SOLITARY EXCEPTION AMONG SINNERS.** Christ differed from all others not in degree only, but in kind. The sublime moral miracle of history.

The first impression which we receive from the life of Jesus is that of perfect innocency and sinlessness in the midst of a sinful world. He, and he alone, carried the spotless purity of childhood untarnished through his youth and manhood. Hence the lamb and the dove are his appropriate symbols.

14. Subject to Temptation.—He was, indeed, tempted as we are; but he never yielded to temptation. [11] His sinlessness was at first only the *relative* sinlessness of Adam before the Fall; which implies the necessity of trial and temptation, and the peccability, or the possibility of sinning. Had he been endowed from the start with *absolute* impeccability, or with the impossibility of

[11] Comp. with the history of the temptation in the wilderness, Matt. 4 and Luke 4, the significant passage in Hebrews 4:15, "Tempted in all points like as we are, yet *without sin*."

sinning, he could not be a true man, nor our model for imitation: his holiness, instead of being his own self-acquired act and inherent merit, would be an accidental or outward gift, and his temptation an unreal show. As a true man, Christ must have been a free and responsible moral agent: freedom implies the power of choice between good and evil, and the power of disobedience as well as obedience to the law of God.

15. Fully Resisting Temptation.—But here is the great fundamental difference between the first and the second Adam: the first Adam lost his innocence by the abuse of his freedom, and fell, by his own act of disobedience, into the dire necessity of sin; while the second Adam was innocent in the midst of sinners, and maintained his innocence against all and every temptation. Christ's relative sinlessness became absolute sinlessness by his own moral act, or the right use of his freedom in perfect active and passive obedience to God. In other words, Christ's original *possibility of not sinning*, which includes the opposite possibility of sinning, but excludes the actuality of sin, was unfolded into the *impossibility of sinning*, which *cannot* sin because it *will not*. This is the highest stage of freedom where it becomes identical with moral necessity, or absolute and unchangeable self-determination for goodness and holiness. This is the freedom of God, and also of the saints in heaven; with this difference, that the saints obtain that position by deliverance and salvation from sin and death, while Christ acquired it by his own merit.

16. A Sinless Record.—In vain do we look through the entire biography of Jesus for a single stain or the slightest shadow on his moral character. There never lived a more harmless being on earth. He injured nobody, he took advantage of nobody. He never spoke an

improper word, he never committed a wrong action. He exhibited a uniform elevation above the objects, opinions, pleasures, and passions of this world, and disregard to riches, displays, fame, and favor of men. "No vice that has a name can be thought of in connection with Jesus Christ. Ingenious malignity looks in vain for the faintest trace of self-seeking in his motives; sensuality shrinks abashed from his celestial purity; falsehood can leave no stain on him who is incarnate truth; injustice is forgotten beside his errorless equity; the very possibility of avarice is swallowed up in his benignity and love; the very idea of ambition is lost in his divine wisdom and divine self-abnegation." [12]

The apparent outbreak of passion in the expulsion of the profane traffickers from the Temple is the only instance on the record of his history which might be quoted against his freedom from the faults of humanity. But the very effect which it produced shows that, far from being the outburst of passion, the expulsion was a judicial act of a religious reformer, vindicating, in just and holy zeal, the honor of the Lord of the Temple. It was an exhibition, not of weakness, but of dignity and majesty, which at once silenced the offenders, though they were superior in physical strength, and made them submit to their well-deserved punishment without a murmur. They were overawed by the presence of a superhuman power. The cursing of the unfruitful fig-tree can still less be urged; as it evidently was a significant symbolical act, foreshadowing the fearful doom of the impenitent Jews in the destruction of Jerusalem. On the contrary, these two facts become fully intelligible only by the assumption of the presence of the Divinity in Christ; for they represent

[12] Peter Bayne, *The Testimony of Christ to Christianity*, p. 105.

him as the Lord of the Temple, and as the Lord of creation.

The perfect innocence of Jesus is based, not only negatively on the absence of any recorded word or act to the contrary, and his exemption from every trace of selfishness and worldliness, but positively also, on the unanimous testimony of John the Baptist, and the apostles who bowed before the majesty of his character in unbounded veneration, and declared him "just," "holy," and "without sin." [13] It is admitted, moreover, by his enemies,—the heathen judge Pilate, and his wife, representing, as it were, the Roman law and justice when they shuddered with fear, and when Pilate washed his hands to be clear of innocent blood; by the rude Roman centurion confessing under the cross, in the name of the disinterested spectators: "Truly this was a Son of God;" and by Judas himself, the witness of his whole public and private life, when he exclaimed in despair: "I sinned in betraying innocent blood." [14] Even dumb nature responded in mysterious sympathy; and the beclouded heavens above, and the shaking earth beneath, united in paying their unconscious tribute to the divine purity of their dying Lord.

The objection that the Evangelists were either not fully informed concerning the facts, or mistaken in their estimate of the character of Christ, is of no avail. For, in addition to their testimony, we have his own personal conviction of entire freedom from sin; which leaves us only the choice between absolute purity and absolute hypocrisy: such hypocrisy as would be the greatest moral monstrosity on record.

[13] Comp. Acts 3:14; 1 Pet. 1:19; 2:22; 3:18; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 John 2:29; 3:5, 7; Heb. 4:15; 7:26.

[14] Matt. 27:19, 24-54; Luke 23:22-47; Matt. 27:4.

17. Consciously Sinless.—The very fact that Christ came for the express purpose of saving sinners, implies his own consciousness of personal freedom from guilt and from all need of salvation. And this is the impression made upon us by his public life and conduct. He nowhere shows the least concern for his own salvation, but knows himself to be in undisturbed harmony with his heavenly Father. While calling most earnestly upon all other men to repent, he stood in no need of conversion and regeneration, but simply of the regular harmonious unfolding of his moral powers. While directing all his followers, in his model prayer, to ask for the forgiveness of their sins as well as their daily bread, he himself never asked God for pardon and forgiveness except in behalf of others. While freely conversing with sinners, he always did so with the love and interest of a Saviour of sinners. He always did so: this is the historical fact, no matter how you may explain it. And, to remove every doubt, we have his open and fearless challenge to his bitter enemies: "Which of you convicteth me of sin?" (John 8: 46.) In this question, which remains unanswered to this day, he clearly exempts himself from the common fault and guilt of the race. In the mouth of any other man, this question would at once betray either the height of hypocrisy, or a degree of self-deception bordering on madness itself, and would overthrow the very foundation of all human goodness; while, from the mouth of Jesus, we instinctively receive it as the triumphant self-vindication of one who stood far above the possibility of successful impeachment or founded suspicion.

The assumption that Christ was a sinner, and knew himself such, although he professed the contrary, and made upon friends and enemies the impression of spot-

less innocency, is the most monstrous deception that can well be imagined. "If Jesus was a sinner, he was conscious of sin as all sinners are, and therefore was a hypocrite in the whole fabric of his character; realizing so much of divine beauty in it, maintaining the show of such unfaltering harmony and celestial grace, and doing all this with a mind confused and fouled by the affectations acted for true virtues! Such an example of successful hypocrisy would be itself the greatest miracle ever heard of in the world." [15]

18. **The Solitary Exception among Sinners.**—It is an indisputable fact, then, both from his mission and uniform conduct, and his express declaration, that Christ *knew* himself free from sin and guilt. The only rational explanation of this fact is that Christ *was* no sinner. And this is readily conceded by the greatest divines, even those who are by no means regarded as orthodox.[16] The admission of this fact implies the further admission, that Christ differed from all other men, not in degree only, but in *kind*. For although we must utterly repudiate the pantheistic notion of the necessity of sin, and maintain that human nature in itself considered is capable of sinlessness, that it was sinless, in fact, before the Fall, and that it will ultimately become sinless again by the redemption of Christ,—yet it is equally certain that human nature in its *present* condition is not sinless, and never has been since the Fall, except in the single case of Christ; and that, for this very reason, Christ's sinlessness can only be explained on the ground of such an extraordinary indwelling of God in him as never took place in any other human being before or after.

[15] Horace Bushnell, *Nature and the Supernatural*, p. 325.
[16] Schleiermacher, *Der Christliche Glaube*, Vol. II, p. 78.

The Bible, the conscience of man, and the daily experience of life, unite in testifying to the universal fact of sin, no matter how we may explain it. Sin is the deep, dark mystery of history, the stumbling-block to reason, the problem of problems, the fruitful source of all misery and woe. The literature of all nations and ages is full of lamentations over this most awful and most stubborn of all facts. Even heathen philosophers, historians, and poets acknowledge it. "The evil passions," says Plutarch, "are inborn in man, and were not introduced from without; and, if strict discipline would not come to aid, man would hardly be tamer than the wildest beast." The well-known line of the Roman poet:

"Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor;"

and that other:

"Nitimur in vetitum semper cupimusque negata,"

have often been quoted as a striking response of the heathen conscience and experience to the inspired description of the moral conflict between heaven and hell in every soul (Rom. 7). And as to the actual condition of morals in the age of Christ and the apostles, Seneca, Tacitus, Persius, and Juvenal give the most unfavorable accounts, which fully corroborate the dark picture of St. Paul in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans. "All is full of crime and vice," says Seneca; "they are open and manifest: iniquity prevails in every heart, and innocence has not only become rare, but has entirely disappeared." Marcus Aurelius, the Stoic philosopher on the throne and the persecutor of Christians, complains that "faithfulness, the sense of honor, righteousness, and truth, have taken their flight from the wide earth to heaven."

If this is the testimony of the sages of heathenism, what shall we say of the Christian, whose sense of sin and guilt is deepened and sharpened in proportion to his knowledge of God's holiness and his experience of God's redeeming grace? The entire Christian world, Greek, Latin, and Protestant, agree in the scriptural doctrine of the universal depravity of human nature since the apostasy of the first Adam. The modern dogma of the Roman Catholic Church, that the Virgin Mary was free from hereditary as well as actual sin, might be quoted as an exception; but her sinlessness is explained, in the papal decision of 1854, by the assumption of a miraculous interposition of divine favor, and by the reflex influence of the merits of her Son. There is not a single mortal who has not to charge himself with some defect or folly; and man's consciousness of sin and unworthiness deepens just in proportion to his self-knowledge, and progress in virtue and goodness. There is not a single saint who has not experienced a new birth from above, and an actual conversion from sin to holiness, and who does not feel daily the need of repentance and divine forgiveness. The very greatest and best of them, as St. Paul and St. Augustine, passed through a violent struggle and a radical revolution; and their whole theological system and religious experience rest on the felt antagonism of sin and grace.

But in Christ we have the one solitary and absolute exception to this universal rule,—an individual thinking like a man, feeling like a man, speaking, acting, suffering, and dying like a man, surrounded by sinners in every direction, with the keenest sense of sin, and the deepest sympathy with sinners, commencing his public ministry with the call: "Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4: 17); yet never touched in

the least by the contamination of the world; never putting himself in the attitude of a sinner before God; never shedding a tear of repentance; never regretting a single thought, word, or deed; never needing or asking divine pardon; never concerned about the salvation of his own soul; and boldly facing all his present and future enemies, in the absolute certainty of his spotless purity before God and man.

A sinless Saviour, surrounded by a sinful world, is an astounding fact indeed; a sublime moral miracle in history. But this freedom from the common sin and guilt of the race is, after all, only the negative side of his character; which rises in magnitude as we contemplate the positive side,—namely, his absolute moral and religious perfection.

CHAPTER VI

PERFECT HOLINESS

19. **CHRIST WAS HOLY IN CONDUCT.** Words are nothing unless supported by deeds. Christ lived his own doctrine. The verdicts of Theodore Parker and Renan.
20. **HE WAS HOLY IN ALL RELATIONS.** Even marriage and fatherhood have their spiritual counterparts in him. He was seen in all situations, and sustained the same consistent character throughout. Guizot's thought as to Christ's unchangeable spirit. Finishes the work given him to do.

It is universally admitted, even by deists and rationalists, that Christ taught the purest and sublimest system of ethics, one which throws the moral precepts and maxims of the wisest men of antiquity far into the shade. The Sermon on the Mount alone is worth infinitely more than all that Confucius, Sakya-Muni, Zoroaster, Socrates, and Seneca ever said or wrote on duty and virtue. Men of the world can hardly resist its power. Napoleon Bonaparte had it once read to him and his friends in the solitude of exile by a son of Count De Las Cases, and "expressed himself struck with the highest admiration of the purity, the sublimity, the beauty of the morality which it contained." De Las Cases, who relates this fact in his Memoires, adds: "We all experienced the same feeling."

19. Holy in Conduct.—But the difference between Christ and the moralists of ancient or modern times is still greater if we come to the more difficult task of

practice. All the systems of moral philosophy combined could not regenerate the world. Words are nothing unless they are supported by deeds. A holy life is a greater power for good than the finest moral maxim or essay. In this respect, the difference between Jesus and the great sages is so radical and fundamental, that comparison ceases. Cicero, who, with all his excessive vanity, was one of the noblest and purest of old Roman characters, confessed that he never found a perfect sage in his life, and that philosophy only taught how he ought to be if he should ever appear on earth. It is well known that the wise men of Greece and Rome sanctioned slavery, oppression, revenge, infanticide or exposure of infants, polygamy, concubinage, and worse vices; or, like the avaricious and venal Seneca, belied their purer moral maxims by their conduct. The greatest saints of the Old Testament, even with the help of divine grace, did not rise above reproach; and some of them are stained with the guilt of blood and adultery. It may be safely asserted, that the wisest and best of men, even among Christian nations, never live up to their own imperfect standard of excellency.

But how is it with Christ? He fully carried out his perfect doctrine in his life and conduct. He both *was* and *did* that which he *taught:* he preached his own life, and lived his own doctrine. He is the living incarnation of the ideal standard of virtue and holiness, and the highest model for all that is pure and good and noble in the sight of God and man.

Even unbelievers must admit this fact. "Christ unites in himself," says Theodore Parker, "the sublimest precepts and divinest practices, thus more than realizing the dream of prophets and sages; rises free from all prejudice of his age, nation, or sect; gives free range

to the Spirit of God in his breast; sets aside the law, sacred and true, honored as it was,—its forms, its sacrifice, its temple, its priests; puts away the doctors of the law,—subtle, irrefragable; and pours out a doctrine beautiful as the light, sublime as heaven, and true as God." [17] And Renan, much as he perverts the life and character of Jesus, freely acknowledges, that both in word and in work, in the doctrine and practice of morality, the hero of Nazareth "is without equal;" that "his glory remains perfect, and will be renewed forever."

20. In All Relations.—We find Christ moving in all ordinary and essential relations of life,[18] as a son, a brother, a friend, a citizen, a teacher, at home and in public. We find him among all classes of society,—with sinners and saints; with the poor and the wealthy; with the sick and the healthy; with little children, grown men and women; with plain fishermen and learned scribes; with despised publicans and honored members of the Sanhedrin; with friends and foes; with admiring disciples and bitter persecutors; now with an individual, as Nicodemus or the woman of Samaria; now in the familiar circle of the twelve; now in the crowds of the people. We find him in all situations,—in the synagogue and the Temple; at home and on journeys; in villages and the city of Jerusalem; in the desert and on the mountain; along the banks of the Jordan and the shores of the Galilean Sea; at the joyous wedding-feast and the solemn grave; in the awful agony of Gethsemane; in the judgment-hall, before the high-

[17] Theodore Parker, *Discourses of Religion*, p. 294.

[18] The relation of husband and father must be excepted, on account of his elevation above all equal partnership, and the universalness of his character and mission which requires the entire community of the redeemed as his bride instead of any individual daughter of Eve.

priest, the king, the Roman governor, rude soldiers, and the fanatical multitude; and at last in the bitter pains of the cross on Calvary.

In all these various relations, conditions, and situations, as they are crowded within the few years of his public ministry, he sustains the same consistent character throughout, without ever exposing himself to censure. As God, according to the Bible, is one and the same always, so also is Christ, according to the gospel. Guizot (in his *Meditations on the Essence of the Christian Religion*) justly remarks: "The most perfect, the most constant unity reigns in Jesus, in his life as in his soul, in his words as in his acts. He progresses according to the circumstances in which he lives; but his progress produces in him no change of character or design. As he appeared already in his twelfth year in the Temple, full of the sense of his divine nature; so he remains and manifests himself during the whole course of his public mission. . . . Everywhere, and under all circumstances, he is animated by the same spirit, he sheds the same light, he proclaims the same law." He fulfils every duty to God, to man, and to himself, with perfect ease and freedom, and exhibits an entire conformity to the law, in the spirit as well as the letter. His life is one unbroken service of God in active and passive obedience to his holy will; one grand act of absolute love to God and love to man; of personal self-consecration to the glory of his heavenly Father, and the salvation of a fallen race. In the language of the people who were "beyond measure astonished" at his works, we must say, the more we study his life: "He hath done all things well" (Mark 7:37).

CHAPTER VII

INTERCOURSE WITH MEN

21 ATTITUDE TOWARD HIS MOTHER. Points to his divine as well as human character. Seeks to give no ground for Mariolatry.
22. TOWARD HIS DISCIPLES. He called them "friends," and bore with them patiently. Under him they became great benefactors and teachers.
23. TOWARD CHILDREN. He received them and said that of such is his kingdom. He commended the childlike spirit to all his followers.
24. TOWARD WOMEN. Purity combined with familiarity and tenderness. Friend and Brother, yet Lord and Saviour.

Let us cast a glance at the intercourse of Jesus with various classes of men.

21. Attitude toward His Mother.—The relation of Jesus to his mother is without a parallel, and points to his divine as well as human character. He treats her with the respect and tenderness of a son, and yet with the dignity and authority of the Messiah. He obeys her as man, and yet commands her to obey and to follow him as her Saviour and example. He was subject to his parents, and thus fulfilled the cardinal virtue of a child (Luke 2: 51); yet even in his twelfth year he told them that he owed supreme allegiance to his heavenly Father (Luke 2: 48, 49). At the wedding of Cana, when Mary, with the best intention, ventured to interfere with his Messianic office, he gently rebuked her haste, saying:

"Woman, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come." And his mother at once reverently submitted (John 2: 4, 5). On a later occasion when she and his brothers and sisters—whether they were cousins, or children of Joseph by a former marriage, or younger children of Mary, makes no difference here—pressed through the crowd to speak to him, he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples and said: "Behold my mother and my brethren; for whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt. 12: 46-50; Luke 8: 21; Mark 3: 34). And when a certain woman lifted up her voice and said to him: "Blessed is the womb that bare thee, and the paps which thou hast sucked," he replied: "Yea rather, blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it" (Luke 11: 27, 28). He manifested his filial affection in his dying moments on the cross when he committed his mother to his bosom disciple with the touching words: "Woman, behold thy son" (John 19: 26). It is the cross which cements pure spiritual relationships, and makes them stronger and dearer than ties of blood. But it is significant that neither here nor elsewhere does he address Mary as "mother," but simply as "woman," as in prophetic foresight and warning against Mariolatry.

22. Toward His Disciples.—The intercourse of Christ with his disciples was frank and familiar, yet inspiring reverence and awe. They both loved and adored him as their Friend and Lord, and put their whole trust in him as their Saviour. He called them "friends." He washed their feet in condescending humility. He kept nothing from them which they could bear and which tended to their benefit. He bore meekly and patiently with their ignorance, their want of faith, their carnal

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notions of the Messiah, and their misunderstandings of his sublime spiritual sayings. He forgave the denial of Peter, and would have forgiven even the treason of Judas, if, instead of hanging himself in despair, he had in tearful repentance fled to the cross. He promised his disciples a glorious reward in heaven, but in this sinful world only poverty, hatred, persecution, and death. He sent them as sheep among wolves. And yet they felt irresistibly drawn to him, and forsook all to follow him. Even if he did something which offended their Jewish prejudices, as his open conversation with a woman, they did not dare to remonstrate, being convinced that their Teacher could do nothing wrong or improper (John 4: 27). How bitterly did Peter bewail his unfaithfulness against the most faithful of the faithful! Under his guidance a dozen poor, unlearned fishermen of Galilee, who without him would have been buried in obscurity, have become the greatest teachers and benefactors of mankind! Where shall we look for a parallel case in history?

23. Toward Children.—Jesus was a friend of children. All good men are. True greatness of character is based on childlike simplicity. The innocence, humility, and trustfulness of childhood are a reminiscence of paradise, and have an irresistible charm. The last favorite exhortation of St. John was: "Little children, love one another!" Gerson, the celebrated Chancellor of the University of Paris, is said to have ended his busy life on the heights of learning and church government with the instruction of children. Luther wrote truly childlike letters to his children in the midst of the battles of the Reformation during the Diet of Augsburg. How many of the noblest men and women nowadays find delight in instructing and caring for children at home, in the

school, in the orphan asylum! And they draw their inspiration for these labors of love from him who took children into his arms and said: "Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not; for of such is the kingdom of God" (Mark 10:14), who praised his heavenly Father for revealing the counsel of his mercy unto babes (Matt. 11:25), and who commended to all his followers a childlike spirit as the necessary condition of entering into his kingdom (Matt. 18:3).

24. Toward Women.—The intercourse of Jesus with women was likewise truly human, and yet truly divine. What freedom and intimacy, as contrasted with rabbinical prejudices and the Oriental contempt of woman! What elevation above sensual passion! What purity combined with familiarity! What dignity blended with tenderness! He who, as the Universal Man and Saviour, could enter into no relation of equality with any fallen daughter of Eve, and who can find a worthy bride only in the whole Church of the redeemed, did not despise the gifts of pious women, and retreated from time to time to that home of peace at Bethany, where the busy, practical Martha administered to his wants, and the retiring, contemplative Mary sat at his feet, drinking in his words of life (Luke 10:38). The groans of the woman in travail, and the joys of the mother over the new-born child, reached his sympathizing ear (John 16:21). He, the purest of the pure, who condemned even the lustful look, as adultery of the heart (Matt. 5:28), allowed a woman of ill-repute to wash and wipe his feet with tears of repentance in the house of a Pharisee (Luke 7:37, 38), and pardoned an open adulteress with the warning: "Go, and sin no more" (John 8:11). How kindly and earnestly did he speak to the Samaritan Magdalene at Jacob's Well, touching her conscience at

the tenderest spot, directing her mind to the true worship of an omnipresent God, and quenching the thirst of her soul with the water of life (John 4). To the weeping Mary Magdalene he appeared in the glory of his resurrection, and filled her with comfort and joy.

He approached women as a friend and brother, and yet as their Lord and Saviour. Hence they were attracted to him as to no other being, with mingled feelings of love and reverence, and in the full conviction that he alone could satisfy their deepest wants and longing after God. They were "the last at the cross and the first at the open sepulcher." And ever since, in unbroken succession, the noblest and purest of women have fled to him for pardon and peace, and consecrated to him their tenderest and strongest affection, for the good of their fellow men. What would woman be without Christ? Her condition in heathen and Mohammedan countries gives but one answer.

CHAPTER VIII

UNITY OF VIRTUE AND PIETY

25. **UNBROKEN COMMUNION WITH GOD.** Piety was the soul of his morality. Uninterrupted union and communion with God. Place of prayer in his life. He becomes the living embodiment of Christianity.
26. **ACTIVE SERVICE TO MAN.** No inactive contemplation, but practical activity. An unbroken series of good works.

The first feature in the singular perfection of Christ's character which strikes our attention is the harmony of virtue and piety, of morality and religion, or of love to God and love to man. He is more than moral, and more than pious; he is holy in the strict and full sense of the word. There is a divine beauty in his character, the mere contemplation of which brings purity, peace, and bliss to the soul.

25. Unbroken Communion with God.—Piety was the soul of his morality, and lifted it far above the sphere of legality or conformity to law. Every moral action in him proceeded from supreme love to God, and looked to the temporal and eternal welfare of man. The groundwork of his character was the most intimate and uninterrupted union and communion with his heavenly Father, from whom he derived, to whom he referred, everything. Already in his twelfth year he found his life-element and delight in the things of his Father (Luke 2: 49). It was his daily food to do the will of

him that sent him, and to finish his work (John 4: 34; comp. 5: 30). To him he looked in prayer before every important act, and taught his disciples that model prayer, which, for simplicity, brevity, comprehensiveness, and suitableness, can never be surpassed. He often retired to a mountain or solitary place for prayer, and spent days and nights in sacred meditation. But so constant and uniform was his habit of communion with the great Jehovah that he kept it up amid the multitude, and converted the crowded city into a religious retreat. His self-consciousness was at every moment conditioned, animated, and impregnated by the consciousness of God. Even when he exclaimed in indescribable anguish of body and soul, and in vicarious sympathy with the misery of the whole race: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Matt. 27: 46) the bond of union was not broken, or even loosened; it was only obscured, as the sun by a passing cloud; and the enjoyment, not the possession, of it was for a moment withdrawn from his feelings; for immediately afterward he triumphantly exclaimed: "It is finished!" and commended his soul into the hands of his Father. So strong and complete was this holy union of Christ with God at every moment of his life, that he fully realized the idea of religion, whose object is to bring about such a union, and that he is the personal representative and living embodiment of Christianity, as the true and perfect religion.

26. Active Service to Man.—With all this, the piety of Christ was no inactive contemplation, or retiring mysticism and selfish enjoyment, but thoroughly practical, ever active in works of charity, and tending to regenerate and transform the world into the kingdom of God. He "went about doing good." His life was an

unbroken series of good works and virtues in active exercise; all proceeding from the same union with God, animated by the same love, and tending to the same end,—the glory of God and the happiness of mankind.

CHAPTER IX

COMPLETENESS AND UNIVERSALITY OF CHRIST'S CHARACTER

27. **GREAT HUMAN CHARACTERS.** Rare men of commanding genius. They concentrate the power of whole generations.
28. **THEIR SECTIONAL ASPECT.** They represent sectional humanity. Extraordinary but fallible men.
29. **CHRIST ALONE IS UNIVERSAL.** The universal type for universal imitation. He arose above all prejudices and bigotries.

The next feature we would notice is the completeness or pleromatic fulness of the moral and religious character of Christ. While all other men represent, at best, but broken fragments of the idea of goodness and holiness, he exhausts the list of virtues and graces. His soul is a moral paradise of charming flowers, that shine in every variety of color under the blue dome of the skies, drink in the refreshing dews of heaven and the warming beams of the sun, send their sweet fragrance around, and fill the beholder with rapturous delight.

27. **Great Human Characters.**—History exhibits to us rare men of commanding and comprehensive genius, who stand at the head of their age and nation, and furnish material for the intellectual activity of whole generations and periods, until they are succeeded by other heroes at a new epoch of development. As rivers generally spring from high mountains, so knowledge and

moral power rise and are ever nourished from the heights of humanity.

Abraham, the father of the faithful; Moses, the lawgiver of the Jewish theocracy; Elijah among the prophets; Peter, Paul, and John among the apostles; Athanasius and Chrysostom among the Greek, Augustine and Jerome among the Latin, fathers; Anselm and Thomas Aquinas among the schoolmen; Leo I and Gregory VII among the popes; Luther and Calvin in the line of Protestant reformers and divines; Socrates, the patriarch of the ancient schools of philosophy; Homer, Dante, Shakespeare and Milton, Goethe and Schiller, in the history of poetry among the various nations to which they belong; Raphael among painters; Charlemagne, the first and greatest in the long succession of German emperors; Napoleon, towering high above all the generals of his training; Washington, the wisest and best, as well as the first, of American Presidents, and the purest and noblest type of the American character, —may be mentioned as examples of those representative heroes in history who anticipate and concentrate the powers of whole generations.

28. Their Sectional Aspect.—But all these characters represent only sectional, never universal, humanity: they are identified with a particular people or age, and partake of their errors, superstitions, and failings, almost in the same proportion in which they exhibit their virtues. Moses, though revered by the followers of three religions, was a Jew in views, feelings, habits, and position, as well as by parentage; Socrates never rose above the Greek type of character; Luther was a German in all his virtues and faults, in his strength and weakness, and can only be properly understood as a German; Calvin, though an exile from his native land, remained a

Frenchman; and Washington can be to no nation on earth what he is to Americans. The influence of these great men may and does extend far beyond their national horizons; yet they can never furnish a universal model for imitation. We regard them as extraordinary but fallible and imperfect men, whom it would be very unsafe to follow in every line of conduct. Very frequently the failings and vices of great men are in proportion to their virtues and powers, as the tallest bodies cast the longest shadows. Even the Apostles are models of piety and virtue only as far as they reflect the image of their heavenly Master; and it is with this express limitation that Paul exhorts his spiritual children: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11: 1).

29. Christ Alone Universal.—What these representative men were to particular ages or nations or sects, or particular schools of science and art, Christ was to the human family at large in its relation to God. He, and he alone, is the universal type for universal imitation. Hence he could, without the least impropriety or suspicion of vanity, call upon all men to forsake all things and to follow him.[19] He stands above the limitations of age, school, sect, nation, and race. He was indeed an Israelite as to the flesh; walked about in the dress of a Jewish rabbi, and not of a Greek philosopher; and conformed, no doubt, to the Jewish habits of daily life. But this was his merest outside. If we look at his inner man, his thoughts and actions, they are of universal significance. There is nothing Jewish about him that is in the least repulsive or exclusive. The particular and national in him is always subordinated to the

[19] Matt. 4: 19; 8: 22; 9: 9; Mark 2: 14; 8: 34; 10: 21; Luke 5: 27; 9: 23, 59; 18: 22; John 1: 43; 10: 27; 12: 26.

general and human. He was never identified with a party or sect. He was equally removed from the stiff formalism of the Pharisees, the loose liberalism of the Sadducees, and the inactive mysticism of the Essenes. He rose above all the prejudices, bigotries, and superstitions of his age and people, which exert their power even upon the strongest and otherwise most liberal minds.

Witness his freedom in the observance of the Sabbath, by which he offended the scrupulous literalists, while he fulfilled, as the Lord of the Sabbath, the true spirit of the law in its universal and abiding significance;[20] his reply to his disciples, when they traced the misfortune of the blind man to a particular sin of the man or of his parents (John 9:3); his liberal conduct toward the Samaritans, as contrasted with the inveterate hatred and prejudice of the Jews, including his own disciples, at the time;[21] and his charitable judgment of the slaughtered Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices, and the eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell (Luke 13: 1-4). "Think ye," he addressed the children of superstition, "that these . . . were sinners above all the Galileans, . . . and above all the men that dwelt in Jerusalem, because they suffered such things? I tell you, Nay; but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

The only instance of Christ's complicity with popular error and superstition which rationalists can point to with some degree of plausibility, is his belief in the devil and in demons. But they may say what they please against such a belief as irrational; experience everywhere disproves their arguments: while they get rid

[20] Matt. 12:1-8; Mark 2:23-28; Luke 6:1-9; John 5:16-18.
[21] See the dialogue with the woman of Samaria, John 4:5 ff.; and the parable of the merciful Samaritan, Luke 10:30-37.

of *one* devil, they cannot deny the *many* devils in human shape, and leave them even more inexplicable; for it is much more irrational to believe in the continued existence of a chaotic wilderness of bad men and principles, than in an organized empire of evil with a controlling head.

As the pyramids rise high above the sandy plains of Egypt, so Christ towers above all human teachers and founders of sects and religions. He is, in the language of a modern infidel, "a man of colossal dimensions." He found disciples and worshipers among the Jews, although he identified himself with none of their sects and traditions; among the Greeks, although he proclaimed no new system of philosophy; among the Romans, although he fought no battle, and founded no worldly empire; among the Hindus, who despise all men of low caste; among the black savages of Africa and the red men of America, as well as the most highly civilized nations of modern times in all quarters of the globe. All his words and all his actions, while they were fully adapted to the occasions which called them forth, retain their force and applicability undiminished in all ages and nations. He is the same unsurpassed and unsurpassable model of every virtue to Christians of every generation, every clime, every sect, every nation, and every race.

CHAPTER X

HARMONY OF ALL GRACES AND VIRTUES IN CHRIST

30. **HE WAS FREE FROM ONE-SIDEDNESS.** Not a man of one idea. Cannot attribute to him any one temperament. His virtue healthy, manly, vigorous, yet genial, social, winning.

31. **BALANCE OF HIS QUALITIES.** Zeal never degenerated into passion. Childlike innocence combined with manly strength. Fearless courage and wise caution. The most radical yet the most conservative of reformers.

It must not be supposed that a complete catalogue of virtues would do justice to the character of Jesus. It is not only the completeness, but still more the even proportion and perfect harmony of virtues and graces, apparently opposite and contradictory, which distinguishes him specifically from all other men. This feature gives the finish to that beauty of holiness which is the sublimest picture that can be presented to our contemplation. It has struck with singular force the best writers on the subject.

30. **Free from One-sidedness.**—Christ was free from all one-sidedness, which constitutes the weakness as well as the strength of great men. He was not a man of one idea, nor of one virtue towering above all the rest. The moral forces were so well tempered and moderated by each other, that none was unduly prominent, none

carried to excess, none alloyed by the kindred failing. Each was checked and completed by the opposite grace. His character never lost its even balance and happy equilibrium, never needed modification or readjustment. It was thoroughly sound and uniformly consistent from the beginning to the end.

We cannot properly attribute to him any one temperament. He was neither sanguine, like Peter; nor choleric, like Paul; nor melancholic, like John. He combined the vivacity of the sanguine temperament without its levity, the vigor of the choleric without its violence, the seriousness of the melancholic without its austerity, the calmness of the phlegmatic without its apathy.

He was equally far removed from the excesses of the legalist, the pietist, the ascetic, and the enthusiast. With the strictest obedience to the law, he moved in the element of freedom; with all the fervor of the enthusiast, he was always calm, sober, and self-possessed. Notwithstanding his complete and uniform elevation above the affairs of this world, he freely mingled with society, male and female, dined with publicans and sinners, played with little children and blessed them, honored the wedding-feast with his cheering presence and first miracle, shed tears at the sepulcher of a friend, delighted in God's nature, admired the beauties of the lilies of the field, and ennobled the occupations of the husbandman for the illustration of the sublime truths of the kingdom of heaven. His virtue was healthy, manly, vigorous, yet genial, social, and winning; never austere and repulsive; always in full sympathy with innocent joy and pleasure. He, the purest and holiest of men, provided wine for the wedding-feast; introduced the fatted calf and music and dancing into the picture of welcome of

the prodigal son to his father's house; and even provoked the sneer of his adversaries that he "came eating and drinking," and was a "glutton" and a "wine-bibber."

31. Balance of His Qualities.—His zeal never degenerated into passion, nor his constancy into obstinacy, nor his benevolence into weakness, nor his tenderness into sentimentality. His unworldliness was free from indifference and unsociability, his dignity from pride and presumption, his affability from undue familiarity, his self-denial from moroseness, his temperance from austerity. He combined childlike innocence with manly strength, absorbing devotion to God with untiring interest in the welfare of man, tender love to the sinner with uncompromising severity against sin, commanding dignity with winning humility, fearless courage with wise caution, unyielding firmness with sweet gentleness.

He is justly compared with the lion in strength and with the lamb in meekness. He equally possessed the wisdom of the serpent and the simplicity of the dove. He brought both the sword against every form of wickedness, and the peace of the soul which the world cannot give. He was the most effective, and yet the least noisy, the most radical, and yet the most conservative, calm, and patient, of all reformers. He came to fulfil every letter of the law; and yet he made all things new. The same hand which drove the profane traffickers from the Temple, blessed little children, healed the lepers, and rescued the sinking disciple; the same ear which heard the voice of approbation from heaven, was open to the cries of the woman in travail; the same mouth which pronounced the terrible woe on hypocrites, and condemned the impure desire and unkind feeling as well as the open crime, blessed the poor in spirit, announced pardon to the adulteress, and prayed for his murderers;

the same eye which beheld the mysteries of God, and penetrated the heart of man, shed tears of compassion over ungrateful Jerusalem, and tears of friendship at the grave of Lazarus.

These are indeed opposite traits of character, yet as little contradictory as the different manifestations of God's power and goodness in the tempest and the sunshine, in the towering Alps and the lily of the valley, in the boundless ocean and the dewdrop of the morning. They are separated in imperfect men, but united in Christ, the universal model for all.

CHAPTER XI

PASSION AND CRUCIFIXION

32. **CHRIST COMPLETE IN SUFFERING.** The highest standard of true martyrdom. Resembles Plato's picture of a righteous man.
33. **FORGIVENESS AND SUBMISSION EXALTED.** Love of one's enemies. A sublime maxim exhibited in life.
34. **MINISTRY FILLED WITH TRIAL.** Christ's path obstructed with difficulties.
35. **SYMPATHETIC PAIN.**
36. **SIN-BEARING PASSION.** Presents a tragedy of universal significance. The death on the cross.
37. **DIVINE GLORY OF SPIRIT.** Shows a commanding grandeur and majesty. Washed out with his blood the guilt of a fallen world.

As all active virtues meet in Jesus, so he unites the active or heroic virtues with the passive and gentle. He is the highest standard of all true martyrdom.

32. Complete in Suffering.—No character can become complete without trial and suffering; and a noble death is the crowning act of a noble life. Edmund Burke said to Fox, in the English Parliament: "Obloquy is a necessary ingredient of all true glory. Calumny and abuse are essential parts of triumph." The ancient Greeks and Romans admired a good man struggling with misfortune, as a sight worthy of the gods. Plato describes the righteous man as one who, without doing any injustice, yet has the appearance of the greatest injustice, and proves his own justice by

perseverance against all calumny unto death; yea, he predicts, that, if such a righteous man should ever appear on earth, he would be scourged, tortured, bound, deprived of his sight, and, after having suffered all possible injury, be nailed to a post. No wonder that ancient fathers and modern divines saw in this remarkable passage a striking parallel to the description of the servant of Jehovah in Isaiah, ch. 53, and an unconscious prophecy of the suffering Christ.

But how far is this abstract ideal of the great philosopher from the actual reality as it appeared three hundred years afterward! The great men of this world, who rise even above themselves on inspiring occasions, and boldly face a superior army, are often thrown off their equilibrium in ordinary life, and grow impatient at trifling obstacles. Only think of Napoleon at the head of his conquering legions and at the helm of an empire, and the same Napoleon after the defeat at Waterloo and on the island of St. Helena. The highest form of passive virtue attained by ancient heathenism or modern secular heroism is that stoicism which meets and overcomes the trials and misfortunes of life in the spirit of haughty contempt and unfeeling indifference, that becomes a destruction of the finer sensibilities and another exhibition of selfishness and pride.

33. **Forgiveness and Submission Exalted.**—Christ has set up a far higher standard by his teaching and example, never known before or since, except in imperfect imitation of him. He has revolutionized moral philosophy, and convinced the world that forgiving love, holiness and humility, gentle patience in suffering, and cheerful submission to the holy will of God, are the crowning excellency of moral greatness. "If thy brother," he says, "trespass against thee seven times in a

day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17: 4). "Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that despitefully use you and persecute you" (Matt. 5: 44). This is a sublime maxim truly; but still more sublime is its actual exhibition in his life.

34. Ministry Filled with Trial.—Christ's passive virtue is not confined to the closing scenes of his ministry. As human life is beset at every step with trials, vexations, and hindrances, which should serve the educational purpose of developing its resources and proving its strength, so was Christ's. During the whole state of his humiliation, he was "a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53: 3), and had to endure the "contradiction of sinners" (Heb. 12: 3). He was poor, and suffered hunger and fatigue; he was tempted by the devil; his path was obstructed with apparently insurmountable difficulties from the outset; his words and miracles called forth the bitter hatred of the world, which resulted at last in the bloody council of death. The Pharisees and Sadducees forgot their jealousies and quarrels in opposing him. They rejected and perverted his testimony; they laid snares for him by insidious questions; they called him a glutton and a winebibber for eating and drinking like other men, a friend of publicans and sinners for his condescending love and mercy, a Sabbath-breaker for doing good on the Sabbath day; they charged him with madness and blasphemy for asserting his unity with the Father, and derived his miracles from Beelzebub, the prince of devils. The common people, though astonished at his wisdom and mighty works, pointed sneeringly at his origin; his own country and native town refused him the honor of a

prophet: his own brothers, we are told, did not believe in him; and, in their impatient zeal for a temporal kingdom, they found fault with his unostentatious mode of proceeding (John 7: 3-10). Even his apostles and disciples, notwithstanding their profound reverence for his character, and faith in his divine origin and mission as the Messiah of God, by their ignorance, their carnal Jewish notions, and their almost habitual misunderstanding of his spiritual discourses, must have constituted a severe trial of patience to a teacher of far less superiority to his pupils.

35. **Sympathetic Pain.**—To all this must be added the constant sufferings from sympathy with human misery as it met him in various forms at every step. What a trial for him, the purest, gentlest, most tender-hearted of men, to breathe more than thirty years the foul atmosphere of this fallen world; to see the constant outbursts of sinful passions; to hear the great wail of humanity borne to his ears on the four winds of heaven; to be brought into personal contact with the blind, the lame, the deaf, the paralytic, the lunatic, the possessed, the dead; and to be assaulted, as it were, by the concentrated force of sickness, sorrow, grief, and agony!

36. **Sin-bearing Passion.**—But how shall we describe his passion, more properly so called, with which no other suffering can be compared for a moment? There is a lonely grandeur in it, foreshadowed in the words of the prophet: "I have trodden the wine-press alone, and of the people there was none with me" (Isa. 63: 3). If great men occupy a solitary position, far above the ordinary level, on the sublime heights of thought or action, how much more, then, Jesus in his sufferings,—he, the purest and holiest of beings! The nearer a man

approaches to moral perfection, the deeper are his sensibilities, the keener his sense of sin and evil and sorrow in this wicked world.

Never did any man suffer more innocently, more unjustly, more intensely, than Jesus of Nazareth. The history of his passion presents, within the narrow limits of a few hours, a tragedy of universal significance, with every form of human weakness and infernal wickedness; of ingratitude, desertion, injury, and insult; of bodily and mental pain and anguish; culminating in the most ignominious death then known among Jews and Gentiles, —the death of a malefactor and a slave. The government and the people combined against him who had come to save them. His own disciples forsook him; Peter denied him; Judas, under the inspiration of the devil, betrayed him; the rulers of the nation condemned him; rude soldiers mocked him; the furious mob cried, "Crucify him!" He was seized in the night, hurried from tribunal to tribunal, arrayed in a crown of thorns, insulted, smitten, scourged, spit upon, compelled to carry his own cross, and nailed to the accursed tree between two robbers and murderers!

37. Divine Glory of Spirit.—How did Christ bear all these little and great trials of life, and the death on the cross?

Let us remember first, that, unlike the icy Stoics in their unnatural and repulsive pseudo-virtue, he had the keenest sensibilities and the deepest sympathies with all human grief, that made him shed tears at the grave of a friend and in the agony of the garden, and provide a refuge for his mother in the last dying hour. But with this touching tenderness and delicacy of feeling he ever combined a serene dignity, a sublime self-control, an imperturbable calmness of mind. There

is a commanding grandeur and majesty in his deepest sufferings which forbids a feeling of pity and compassion as incompatible with the deference for his character. We feel the force of his words to the women of Jerusalem, when they bewailed him on the way to Calvary: "Weep not for me, but weep for yourselves and your children."

He clearly foresaw, and repeatedly foretold, his passion to his disciples.

But he never murmured,—never uttered discontent, displeasure, or resentment. He was never disheartened, ruffled, or fretted, but full of confidence that all was well ordered in the providence of his heavenly Father. His calmness in the tempest on the lake, when his disciples were trembling on the brink of destruction and despair, is an illustration of his heavenly frame of mind. All his works were performed with a quiet dignity and ease that contrast strikingly with the surrounding commotion and excitement. He never asked the favor, or heard the applause, or feared the threat, of the world. He moved serenely, like the sun, above the clouds of human passions and trials and commotions as they sailed under him. He was ever surrounded with the element of peace, even in his parting hour in that dark and solemn night, when he said to his disturbed disciples: "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14: 27). He was never what we call unhappy, but full of inward joy, which he bequeathed to his disciples in that sublimest of all prayers, "that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves" (John 17: 13; comp. 16: 33). With all his severe rebuke to the Pharisees, he never indulged in personalities. He ever returned good

for evil. He forgave Peter for his denial; and would have forgiven Judas, if, in the exercise of sincere repentance, he had sought his pardon. Even while hanging on the cross, he had only the language of pity for the wretches who were driving the nails into his hands and feet; and prayed in their behalf: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." He did not seek or hasten his martyrdom, like many of the early martyrs of the Ignatian type, in their morbid enthusiasm and ambitious humility, but quietly and patiently waited for the hour appointed by the will of his heavenly Father.

But, when the hour came, with what self-possession and calmness, with what strength and meekness, with what majesty and gentleness, did he pass through its dark and trying scenes! A prisoner before Pilate, who represented the power of the Roman Empire, he professes himself a king of truth, and makes the governor tremble before him (John 18: 37; Matt. 27: 19, 24). Charged with crime at the tribunal of the high-priest, he speaks to him with the majesty and dignity of the Judge of the world (Matt. 26: 64); and in the agony of death on the cross he dispenses a place in paradise to the penitent robber (Luke 23: 43). In the history of the passion, every word and act is significant: from the agony in Gethsemane, when overwhelmed with the sympathetic sense of the guilt of mankind, and in full view of the terrible scenes before him,—the only guiltless being in the world,—he prayed that the cup might pass from him, but immediately added: "Not my will, but thine be done," to the triumphant exclamation on the cross: "It is finished!" Even his dignified silence before the tribunal of his enemies and the furious mob, when, "as a lamb dumb before her shearers, he opened

not his mouth," is more eloquent than any apology. Who will venture to bring a parallel from the annals of ancient or modern sages? Even a Rousseau confessed: "If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God." [22]

The nearer we approach to them, the more we feel that the sufferings of Christ are unlike any other suffering; that he died the just for the unjust, the Holy One for sinners; and washed out with his blood the guilt of a fallen world. We bow down and adore the atoning sacrifice of boundless love. The mere idea of a divine-human Redeemer of the race from the thraldom of sin and death is surpassingly sublime and irresistibly attractive: how much more the actual reality! It is, indeed, a mystery which we cannot fully grasp; but a mystery so palpably divine and heavenly in its origin and character, so blessed in its effects, that head and heart are constrained to bow in adoration and praise, and are filled with gratitude and joy. The passion and crucifixion of Jesus, like his whole character, stand without a parallel, solitary and alone in their glory, and will ever continue to be what they have been for these nineteen hundred years to the noblest and best of men,—the sacred theme of meditation, the exemplar of suffering virtue, the weapon against sin and Satan, the stimulus to gratitude and holiness, the source of comfort and peace.

[22] See Appendix, pp. 134, 135.

CHAPTER XII

CHRIST'S CHARACTER THE GREATEST MORAL MIRACLE OF HISTORY

38. **NO ADEQUATE UNINSPIRED PORTRAYAL.** Herder and Pressensé deprecated the attempt. The perfection of art falls short of the historical fact.
39. **TRIBUTES OF GREAT MINDS.** Conviction of the strongest intellects. Significance of Christianity hangs on his person.
40. **CONCLUSIVE PROOF OF DIVINITY.** The supernatural in Christ an inherent power. He was the true Shekinah.

38. No Adequate Uninspired Portrayal.—Such was the Jesus of Nazareth,—a true man in body, soul, and spirit, yet differing from all men; a character unique and original from tender childhood to ripe manhood, moving in unbroken union with God, overflowing with love to man, free from every sin and error, innocent and holy, devoted to the noblest ends, teaching and practising all virtues in perfect harmony, sealing the purest life with the sublimest death, and ever acknowledged since as the one and only perfect model of goodness and holiness. All human greatness loses on closer inspection; but Christ's character grows more pure, sacred, and lovely, the better we know him. The whole range of history and fiction furnishes no parallel to it. There never was any approach to it, before or since, except in

faint imitation of his example. When the gifted Herder was requested by Lavater to write the life of Jesus, he replied: "I to write the life of Jesus? Never! The Evangelists have *done it as alone it can and ought to be written.*" Whoever attempts, in the proper spirit, this most difficult task of history, will lay down his pen discouraged, and subscribe to the concluding confession of Pressensé: "Gladly, thou divine Son of Mary, had I said something great of thee. At times I thought I saw, in the flashing light of a blessed hour, thy divine majesty adorned in spotless purity; but as I was about to fix the holy vision, the pencil trembled in my unskilled hand, and I could give only a pale outline. Who are we that attempt to describe thy holiness!"

No biographer, moralist, or artist can here do justice to the reality. The actual character of Jesus is felt to be far greater than any conception and representation of it by the mind, the tongue, or the pencil of man. We might as well attempt to empty the waters of the boundless sea into a bucket, or to portray the splendor of the risen sun and the starry heavens with ink. No picture of the Saviour, though drawn by the master hand of a Raphael or Dürer or Rubens; no epic, though conceived by the genius of a Dante or Milton,—can improve on the artless narrative of the Gospels, whose only but all-powerful charm is truth. In this case, certainly, truth is stranger than fiction, and speaks best for itself without comment, explanation, or eulogy. Here, and here alone, the perfection of art falls short of the historical fact, and fancy finds no room for idealizing the real; for here we have the absolute ideal itself in living reality. It seems to me that this consideration alone should satisfy a reflecting mind that Christ's character, though truly natural and human,

rises far above the proportions of humanity, even in its purest and greatest representatives.

39. Tributes of Great Minds.—This conviction has forced itself upon many of the strongest intellects, among skeptics and men of the world, in proportion as they allowed themselves to yield to the light of truth and the power of facts. Jean Jacques Rousseau, one of the leaders of French infidelity in the eighteenth century, admitted that there could be no comparison between Socrates and Christ; as little as between a sage and a God. Napoleon, though a stranger to Christian experience, saw with his keen eagle-eye that Christ was more than man; and that, once admitting his divinity, the Christian system becomes as clear and precise as a problem of algebra. His remarkable utterances on this subject at St. Helena may have been somewhat modified and expanded, but bear the unmistakable evidence of the Napoleonic grasp and style. Goethe, the most universal, but at the same time the most worldly, of modern poets, calls Christ "the Divine Man," "the Holy One," and represents him as the pattern and model of humanity. Jean Paul Frederick Richter, another great German poet, represents Jesus of Nazareth as "the purest among the mighty, the mightiest among the pure, who with his piercéd hand has raised empires from their foundations, turned the stream of history from its old channel, and still continues to rule and guide the ages." Thomas Carlyle, the British hero-worshiper, finds none equal to Jesus in all the range of ancient and modern heroism. He called his life a "perfect ideal poem," and him "the greatest of all heroes," whom he does not name, leaving "sacred silence to meditate that sacred matter." Ernest Renan, the famous Orientalist and critic, who expels all miracles from the gospel-history, feels yet

constrained to call Jesus "a man of colossal dimensions;" "the incomparable man, to whom the universal conscience has decreed the title of *Son of God*, and that with justice, since he caused religion to take a step in advance incomparably greater than any other in the past, and probably than *any yet to come;*" and he closes his *Life of Jesus* with the remarkable concession: "Whatever may be the surprises of the future, *Jesus will never be surpassed.* His worship will grow young without ceasing; his legend will call forth tears without end; his sufferings will melt the noblest hearts; all ages will proclaim, that, among the sons of men, there is none born greater than Jesus." [23] Dr. Baur, the master of the Tübingen school and the ablest of skeptical critics, after the earnest investigations of a long and intensely studious life, came to the conclusion at last that the person of Christ remains a great mystery in history; and that, at all events, the whole world-historical significance of Christianity hangs on his person.

40. Conclusive Proof of Divinity.—Yes, Christ's person is, indeed, a great but blessed mystery. It cannot be explained on purely humanitarian principles, nor derived from any intellectual and moral forces of the age in which he lived. On the contrary, it stands in marked contrast to the whole surrounding world of Judaism and Heathenism, which presents to us the dreary picture of internal decay, and which actually crumbled into ruin before the new moral creation of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth. He is the one absolute exception to the universal experience of mankind. He is the central miracle of the whole gospel-history. All his miracles are but the natural manifestations of his person, and hence they were performed with the same

[23] See Appendix, p. 146.

ease with which we perform our ordinary daily works. In the Gospel of St. John, they are simply and justly called his "works." It would be the greatest miracle indeed, if he, who is a miracle himself, should have performed no miracles.

Here is just the logical inconsistency of those unbelievers who admit the extraordinary character of Christ's person, and yet deny his extraordinary works. They admit a cause without a corresponding effect, and involve the person in conflict with his works, or the works with the person. You may as well expect the sun to send forth darkness as to expect ordinary works from such an extraordinary being. The person of Christ accounts for all the wonderful phenomena in his history, as a sufficient cause for the effect. Such a power as he possessed over the soul, and still exercises from day to day throughout Christendom,—why should it not extend also over the lesser sphere of the body? What was it for him, who is spiritually the Resurrection and the Life of the race, to call forth a corpse from the grave? Could such a heavenly life and heavenly death as his end in any other way than in absolute triumph over death, and in ascension to heaven, its proper origin and home?

The supernatural and miraculous element in Christ, let it be borne in mind, was not a borrowed gift or an occasional manifestation, as we find it among the prophets and apostles, but an inherent power in constant silent or public exercise. An inward virtue dwelt in his person, and went forth from him, so that even the fringe of his garment was healing to the touch through the medium of faith, which is the bond of union between him and the soul. He was the true Shekinah, and shone in all his glory, not before the multitude or the unbe-

lieving Pharisees and scribes, but when he was alone with his Father, or when he walked in the dark night over the waves of the sea, calming the storm of nature and strengthening the faith of his timid disciples, or when he stood, before his favorite three, between Moses and Elijah, on the mount of transfiguration.

Thus from every direction we arrive at the conclusion that Christ, though truly natural and human, was at the same time truly supernatural and divine. The wonderful character of his person forces upon us the admission of the indwelling of the Divinity in him, as the only rational and satisfactory explanation of this mysterious fact. And this is the explanation which he gives himself.

CHAPTER XIII

CHRIST'S OWN TESTIMONY CONCERNING HIMSELF

41. **SON OF MAN.** Man in the highest sense. His manhood becomes the portal of his Godhood.
42. **SON OF GOD.** His absolute and eternal Sonship. Far above the level of human sonship to God.
43. **CENTRAL PLACE OF CHRIST'S PERSON.**
44. **LAWGIVER OF NEW DISPENSATION.** The last commission. Founder of a spiritual kingdom.
45. **CONSCIOUS PRE-EXISTENCE.** "Before Abraham was born, I am."
46. **SIGNIFICANCE OF CHRIST'S CLAIMS.** He sets them forth as self-evident truths.

THERE is but one rational explanation of this sublime mystery; and this is found in Christ's own testimony concerning his superhuman and divine origin and character.

This testimony challenges at once our highest regard and belief from the absolute veracity which no one ever denied him, or could deny, without destroying at once the very foundation of his moral purity and greatness.

41. Son of Man.—Christ strongly asserts his humanity, and calls himself, about eighty times in the Gospels, *the Son of man.* This expression, while it places him in one view on common ground with us as flesh of our flesh and bone of our bone, already indicates at the same time that he is more than an ordinary in-

dividual,—not merely *a* son of man like all other descendants of Adam, but *the* Son of man; the Man in the highest sense; the ideal, the universal, the absolute Man; the second Adam, descended from heaven; the Head of a new and superior order of the race, the King of Israel, and the Messiah for Jews and Gentiles. It is more comprehensive than the term, "the Son of David," which is likewise given to Christ as the promised Messiah, with special reference to the Jews.[24]

The appellation *the Son of man* does not express, then, as many suppose, the humiliation and condescension of Christ simply, but his elevation rather above the ordinary level, and the actualization, in him and through him, of the ideal standard of human nature under its moral and religious aspect, or in its relation to God. He is the center of the unity of mankind,—the "recapitulation" of humanity, to use a term of Irenæus. He is the true seed of the woman, the second Adam, who was to restore what the first Adam lost. He fulfils and closes the preceding, and opens and controls the succeeding, history of our race. All men, even the best and the greatest, have their weaknesses and defects, and reflect only a fragment of the idea of humanity. Once in history, and once only, there was born a man who represented humanity in its purity without the satanic adulteration of sin, and in its universality without the limitations of nationality and age. Christ felt more humanly, spake more humanly, acted, suffered, and died more humanly, than any man before or since his coming. Every word and act of his appeals to universal human sympathies, and calls out the moral affections of all without distinction of race, condition, and culture. He is the archetypal or model Man, the King of men. He

[24] Matt. 9:27; 15:22; 12:23; 21:9; 22:41 ff., etc.

draws "all men" to him. He could not have been so perfect a man without being also divine.

This interpretation of the title "the Son of man" is supported grammatically by the use of the definite article, and historically by the origin of the term (according to the usual acceptation) in Dan. 7: 13, 14, where it signifies the Messiah as the head of a universal and eternal kingdom. In the eighth Psalm, which is regarded as Messianic, man is represented in his ideal destination with reference to the Messiah as the true head of humanity (comp. Rom. 5: 12; 1 Cor. 15: 21, 22; Heb. 1: 2-8). In the Syriac, the Saviour's native dialect, *Bar nosho*, the Son of Man, means man generically; the filial part of the compound denotes the identity and purity of the generic idea.

This view commends itself, moreover, at once as the most natural and significant, in such passages as, "Ye shall see the heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (John 1: 51); "He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven" (John 3: 13); "The Son of man hath power to forgive sins" (Matt. 9: 6; Mark 2: 10); "The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath-day" (Matt. 12: 8; Mark 2: 28); "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you" (John 6: 53); "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father;"[25] "The Son of man is come to save" (Matt. 18: 11; comp. Luke 19: 10); The Father "hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man" (John 5: 27). Even those passages which are quoted for the opposite view, receive, in our interpretation, a greater force and

[25] Matt. 16: 27; compare 19: 28; 24: 30; 25: 31; 26: 64; Luke 21: 27, 36.

beauty from the sublime contrast which places the voluntary condescension and humiliation of Christ in the most striking light, as when he says: "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke 9:58); or, "Whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:27, 28).

Thus the manhood of Christ, rising far above all ordinary manhood, though freely coming down to its lowest ranks with a view to their elevation and redemption, is already the portal of his Godhood.

42. Son of God.—But he calls himself at the same time, and he is most frequently called by his disciples, *the Son of God*, in an equally emphatic sense. He is not merely *a* son of God among others,—angels, archangels, princes, judges, and redeemed men,—but *the* Son of God as no other being ever was, is, or can be; all others being sons or children of God only by derivation or adoption, after a new spiritual birth, and in dependence on his absolute and eternal Sonship.[26] He is, as his favorite disciple calls him, the *only-begotten Son*, or, as the old Catholic theology expresses it, "eternally begotten of the substance of the Father." In this high sense the title is freely given to him by his disciples,[27] without a remonstrance on his part; and by God the Father himself at his baptism and at the transfiguration.[28] It is significant, too, that, while he directs us to address God as "*our* Father," he himself always ad-

[26] Matt. 11:27; 21:37; 22:42; 26:63 f.; 27:43; Mark 12:6; 13:32; 14:62; Luke 10:22; John 5:19-26; 9:35-38; 10:36; 11:4; 14:13; 17:1; 19:7.

[27] Matt. 16:16; Mark 3:11; John 1:18, 34, 49; 11:27; 20:31.

[28] Matt. 3:17; Luke 3:22; Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:35.

dresses him: "*My* Father," or "Father" simply, because he sustains a peculiar relation to him far above the level of human children of God, who are made such only by regeneration and adoption.

43. Central Place of Christ's Person.—Christ founds his whole doctrine and kingdom on his own person. His divine-human person is his constant theme, his cause. He is himself the impersonation of the gospel. He makes the highest claims without the remotest sense of pride or ambition or vanity, but with the simplicity and authority of self-evident truth. Hence his words have such an overwhelming power over the hearts. "Verily, verily, I say unto you." So God speaks in the Old Testament, but no man. "If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8: 24). What a majesty is implied in this declaration!

Christ represents himself constantly as being "not of this world," but "sent from God," as having "come from God," and as being "in heaven," while living on earth (John 3: 13). He not only announces and proclaims the truth as other messengers of God, but declares himself to be "the Light of the World" (John 8: 12); "the Way, the Truth, and the Life" (John 14: 6); "the Resurrection and the Life" (John 11: 25). "All things," he says, "are delivered unto me of my Father; and no man knoweth the Son but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him" (Matt. 11: 27). He invites the weary and heavy-laden to come to him for rest and peace (Matt. 11: 28); he promises life in the highest sense, even eternal life, to every one who believes in him;[29] he claims and admits himself to be the Christ, or the Messiah, of whom Moses and the prophets of old

[29] John 3:36; 5:24; 6:40, 47, 50-58; 11:25.

testify, and the King of Israel.[30] When, in view of his approaching death, and under a solemn appeal to the living God, he was challenged by the Jewish high priest, in the name of the venerable though corrupt theocracy, with the question: "Art thou the Christ [the promised Messiah], the Son of God?" he calmly and deliberately answered in the affirmative, and pointed him to his glorious return in the clouds of heaven; thus proclaiming himself, in the moment of the deepest humiliation and in the face of the apparent triumph of the powers of darkness, the Godlike Ruler and Judge of mankind! (Matt. 26: 63-65.)

The only choice here is between a truly divine man and a mad blasphemer. The high priest understood the meaning of this solemn affirmation better than many modern writers: he rent his sacerdotal garment, and exclaimed in indignation and horror: "He hath spoken blasphemy!"

44. Lawgiver of New Dispensation.—Jesus, moreover, repeatedly represents himself as the Lawgiver of the new and last dispensation (Matt. 5: 22-24; 28: 19, 20); as the Founder of a spiritual kingdom coextensive with the race, and everlasting as eternity itself;[31] as the appointed Judge of the quick and the dead;[32] as the only Mediator between God and man; as the Saviour of the world.[33] He parts from his disciples with these sublime words: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the

[30] John 4:26; 5:36, 39; Matt. 14:33; 16:16 f.; 26:63 f.; etc.
[31] Matt. 16:19; 27:11; Luke 22:30; John 18:36. Compare Dan. 7:13; Luke 1:33.
[32] John 5:22, 25-27; Matt. 25:31 ff., etc.
[33] Matt. 18:11; Luke 9:56; 19:10; John 3:17; 5:34; 10:9; 12:47. Compare Luke 1:47; 2:11; John 4:42, etc.

Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matt. 28: 18-20).

Here he claims such a relation to the eternal Father and the Holy Spirit as implies both the equality of substance and the distinction of person, and leads with logical necessity to the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. For this doctrine alone saves the divinity of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, without affecting the fundamental truth of the Unity of the Godhead; and keeps the proper medium between an abstract and lifeless monotheism and a polytheistic tritheism.

Christ always distinguishes himself from God the Father, who sent him, whose works he came to fulfil, whose will he obeys, by whose power he performs his miracles, to whom he prays, and with whom he communes, as a self-conscious personal being. And so he distinguishes himself with equal clearness from the Holy Spirit, whom he received at his baptism, whom he breathed into his disciples, and whom he promised to send and did send on them as the other Paraclete or Advocate, as the Spirit of truth and holiness, with the whole fulness of the accomplished salvation. But he never makes a similar distinction between himself and the Son of God; on the contrary, he identifies himself with the Son of God, and uses this term, as already remarked, in a sense which implies much more than the Jewish conception of the Messiah, and nothing short of the equality of essence or substance.

45. Conscious Pre-existence.—For he claims, as the Son of God, a real self-conscious pre-existence before man, and even before the world; consequently, also, before time; for time was created with the world. Hence

the Arian notion of a *temporal* pre-existence of Christ is metaphysically untenable. It assumes a creature to have existed before the creation, and a finite being to have begun existence before time. Before the act of creation, there was nothing but God and eternity. Time is the necessary form under which the world exists successively, as space is the form under which all material substances exist simultaneously. Time, before the world, could only have referred to God, who does not exist in time, but in eternity. "*Before* Abraham *was born*," or *began to be*, says Christ, "*I am*" (John 8: 58); significantly using two distinct verbs, and the past tense in the one and the present in the other case, to mark the difference between man's temporal and his own eternal mode of existence. In the sacerdotal prayer, he asks to be clothed again with the glory which he *had* with the Father *before* the foundation of the world (John 17: 5). He assumes divine names and attributes as far as consistent with his state of humiliation; he demands and receives divine honors (John 5: 23); he freely and repeatedly exercises the prerogative of pardoning sin in his own name, which the unbelieving scribes and Pharisees, with a logic whose force is irresistible on their premises, looked upon as blasphemous presumption;[34] he familiarly classes himself with the infinite Jehovah in one common plural, and boldly declares: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14: 9); "I and the Father are one" (John 10: 30).[35] He co-ordinates himself, in the baptismal formula, as we have seen, with the Divine Father, and the Divine Spirit (Matt. 28: 19); and

[34] Matt. 9:6; Luke 5:20-24; 7:47, 48.

[35] The passage teaches, certainly, more than the ethical unity of will: it asserts, according to the context, the unity of power which is based on the unity of essence.

allows himself to be called by Thomas, in the name of all the Apostles, "Lord and God" (John 20: 28).

46. Significance of Christ's Claims.—These are the most astounding and transcendent pretensions ever set up by any being. He, the humblest and lowliest of men, makes them repeatedly and uniformly to the last, in the face of the whole world,—even in the darkest hour of suffering. He makes them, not in swelling, pompous, ostentatious language, which almost necessarily springs from false pretensions, but in a natural, spontaneous style, with perfect ease, freedom, and composure, as a native prince would speak of the attributes and scenes of royalty at his father's court. He never falters or doubts, never apologizes for them, never enters into an explanation; he sets them forth as self-evident truths, which need only be stated to challenge the belief and submission of mankind.

Now, suppose for a moment a purely human teacher, however great and good; suppose a Moses or Elijah, a John the Baptist, an Apostle Paul, or John,—not to speak of any uninspired teacher,—to say: "I am the Light of the World;" "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life;" "I and the Father are one;" and to call upon all men, "Come unto me;" "Follow me," that you may find "life" and "peace," which cannot be found elsewhere: would it not create a universal feeling of pity or indignation? No human being on earth could set up the least of these pretensions without being set down at once as a madman or a blasphemer.

But from the mouth of Christ these colossal pretensions excite neither pity nor indignation, nor even the least feeling of incongruity or impropriety. We read and hear them over and over again without surprise. They seem perfectly natural, and well sustained by the most extraordinary life and the most extraor-

dinary works. There is no room here for the least suspicion of vanity, pride, or self-deception. For these eighteen hundred years, these claims have been acknowledged by millions of people of all classes and conditions, the most learned as well as the most ignorant, with an instinctive sense of the perfect agreement of what Christ claimed to be with what he really was.

Is not this fact most remarkable? Is it not a triumphant vindication of Christ's claims? And can we deny the truth, and refuse to acknowledge his divinity, without destroying his veracity, and overthrowing the very foundation of his moral goodness and purity, which are universally acknowledged even by heretics and unbelievers? If he, the wisest, the best, the holiest of men, the greatest teacher and benefactor of the race,—acknowledged as such by the common consent of the civilized world,—declares himself one with the Father, and so identifies himself in will and aim, in essence and attributes, with the infinite God, to an extent and in a sense that no man or angel or archangel could do for a moment without blasphemy or insanity, and if he receives the divine adoration from his own disciples, how can we, in logical consistency, as well as in harmony with the moral and religious instincts of our nature, refuse to fall down before him, and, with Thomas, to exclaim from the depths of our soul: "My Lord and my God"?

This is the "*testimonium animæ naturaliter Christianæ*," to use a celebrated expression of Tertullian. It is the testimony of the soul which is originally made for Christ, and longs for him, and finds no satisfaction of its infinite desires for truth, beauty, and goodness, until it believes in Christ who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, the divine Man and the incarnate God in one undivided person forever.

CHAPTER XIV

EXAMINATION OF FALSE THEORIES

47. THE DENIAL OF MIRACLES. Hume's assumption.
48. EVIDENCE OF THEIR REALITY.
49. GENERAL ARGUMENT. True miracles are above nature, not against nature.
50. AS ATTRIBUTED TO CHRIST.
51. AS ATTRIBUTED TO THE DISCIPLES.
52. THAT CHRIST HIMSELF WAS DECEIVED.
53. THAT THE EVANGELISTS WERE DECEIVED.
54. THE MYTHICAL HYPOTHESIS.
55. THEORY EXAMINED.
56. AN INSURMOUNTABLE DIFFICULTY.
57. INVERSION OF NATURAL ORDER.
58. CONTRARY TO FACTS.
59. THE LEGENDARY HYPOTHESIS.
59a. HOSTILE TO MIRACLES.

47. The Denial of Miracles.—There is no other solution of the mighty problem within the reach of human learning and ingenuity than the one given by Christ himself.

The infidel and semi-infidel theories of Christ's person substitute an unnatural wonder and moral monstrosity in the place of the supernatural miracle which they endeavor to escape.

Hume says, in his famous "Essay on Miracles": "When any one tells me that he saw a dead man restored to life, I immediately consider with myself, whether it

be more probable that this person should either deceive or be deceived, or that the fact he relates should really have happened. I weigh the one miracle against the other; and, according to the superiority which I discover, I pronounce my decision, and always reject the greater miracle. If the falsehood of his testimony would be more miraculous than the event which he relates, then, and not till then, can he pretend to demand my belief or opinion." We need not fear this test, and can turn it in our case against Hume and against every doubter of the great miracle of Christ's person.

48. Evidence of Their Reality.—The life of Christ was not spent in an obscure corner (Acts 26: 26), but before the eyes of the people, before Pharisees and Sadducees, before Herod and Pilate, before Jews and Romans, before friends and foes, in Galilee, Samaria, and Judea. His history was openly proclaimed again and again by eye-witnesses and their pupils before the people and the Sanhedrin, from Jerusalem to Rome. It was believed by thousands of contemporary Jews and Gentiles, in spite of bitter persecution and death. It was sealed by the martyrdom of Apostles, Evangelists, and Christians of every grade of society. It is better attested by external and internal evidence than any history in the world.

The contemporaries of Jesus, his enemies as well as his friends, believed in his power of miracles, with this difference: that the one traced it to Satan, the other to God. Is it credible that John the Baptist, of whom no miracles are recorded, the twelve Apostles, the seventy disciples, the learned and clear-headed Paul, the Evangelists, Nicodemus, the hostile Pharisees and Sadducees, the Sanhedrin, and the common people in Jerusalem and the villages of Galilee who witnessed his mighty

works, should all have been radically mistaken? Had they not eyes and ears, and common sense as well as we? Is there a more palpable example of obvious honesty and truthfulness in literature than the pages of the canonical Gospels and Epistles? The disciples were by no means overcredulous. Thomas was decidedly skeptical; the rest are often censured for their want of faith, and it was only after the resurrection that they reached the full measure of faith. The unbelieving Pharisees and Sadducees had every motive to deny the miracles of Jesus, but they could not do it without contradicting the testimony of their senses. No miracles are recorded during the thirty years before he entered on his public ministry. This silence is very significant, and an indirect argument for the truthfulness of the canonical, as compared with the apocryphal, gospels. He exercised the power of miracles sparingly; he never obtruded them on anybody; he made no display; he never sought gain or honor. His miracles were, without exception, prompted by the purest motives and aimed at the glory of God and the benefit of men; they are miracles of love and mercy, full of instruction and significance, and in harmony with his character and mission.

49. **General Argument.**—The historical evidence and the internal character of the miracles are entirely in their favor. To reject them imposes upon us the incredible belief that a whole generation of friends and foes were radically mistaken in a matter of common experience.

But we are told that miracles are impossible. This is an *à priori* assumption and pseudo-philosophical prejudice, in the face of the apostolic age, the whole Bible, and the common belief of mankind in all ages. It is an unproved dogma turned against facts. It proceeds from

a pantheistic or materialistic philosophy which, as Bacon says, leads away from God, while true philosophy leads back to him. If we believe in a personal God, the Maker and Ruler of the world, we shall find no difficulty in miracles. The act of creation is the first and greatest miracle, which no reasonable man can deny, any more than the fact of his own birth, which, nevertheless, no philosopher can understand or explain. This world and the life in it must have had a beginning. Cuvier says: "Life has not always been on earth, and it is possible to fix the time when it originated." Agassiz and other naturalists are of the same opinion. Geology and biology prove the gradual growth and development of earth and its inhabitants. The theory of progressive development itself necessarily leads back to a beginning; and this cannot be found in nothing (for *ex nihilo nihil fit*), nor in dead matter, which could never produce mind, but only in the creative will of an infinite intelligence working on a plan of infinite wisdom. The same Almighty power which called heaven and earth and man into being still controls and directs the laws of nature and of history. These laws are not iron chains by which their author has bound himself hand and foot, but elastic cords, rather, which he can expand or contract at his sovereign will.

It is incorrect to say that miracles are suspensions or violations of the unchangeable laws of nature, and therefore impossible. True miracles are *above* nature, not *against* nature, as revelation is above reason, not against reason. They are a manifestation of a higher law, which the lower laws must obey. We find in nature itself one kingdom ruling over the other, the animal over the vegetable, and man over both. In man, again, the mind rules over the body. Man is supernatural as

compared with the lower nature; and the mind is a miracle as compared with the body. If we raise our arm in obedience to our will, the law of gravity is held in temporary abeyance, or subordinated to the higher law of free action, but not abrogated or discontinued. Every virtue is a victory over nature, though not a suspension or annihilation of it. If a man can act upon nature from without and control it, why not much more God, the independent Lord of creation? The control of nature by the will of man is no miracle, in the proper sense of the term, but it involves all the speculative difficulties which are urged against it by materialists and atheists. Reasoning from analogy, we have a right to ascend to a higher sphere.

The belief in the supernatural and miraculous, far from being a sign of intellectual weakness, has been held by the greatest minds in all ages and nations. It is only since the last century that the opposite tendency has set in, but philosophy itself will return from materialism and atheism, which explain nothing, to Christian theism which alone accounts for the problem of the world, by tracing the effect to a satisfactory cause.

To return to the life of Christ, the presumption is altogether in favor of his having performed extraordinary works in correspondence with his extraordinary person. If he really towers so high above other mortals as we have seen, and as is generally admitted even by unbelievers, we must expect from him deeds which equally rise above the ordinary level. To believe in his miraculous person is to believe in his miraculous works. To do the former without the latter is a palpable inconsistency.

We shall now examine in detail the infidel theories of the Life and Character of Christ. They may be re-

duced to three: the hypothesis of *Imposture*, the hypothesis of *Enthusiasm*, and the hypothesis of *Poetic Fiction*. In other words, the gospel story is either a conscious lie, or a self-delusion, or a poem. In each of the three cases the result may be traced either to Christ himself or to his disciples. The former method is more offensive, but more logical; the latter makes the Apostles the real authors of Christianity, which is absurd. The three hypotheses exhaust the possibilities of the case, but they admit of various modifications and partly run into each other. They agree in rejecting the truth of the supernatural and divine in Christ's character, but otherwise they widely differ and refute each other. The theory of imposture is the oldest and the most revolting; the theory of poetic fiction is the latest and most ingenious, but is logically forced back to the former, from which it professed at first to shrink in moral indignation; the theory of enthusiasm occupies an untenable middle ground. Hence the alternative remains as at first. Christ is either an impostor and blasphemer who wrought miracles by Beelzebub, and was justly crucified by the Jews, or he is the Son of the living God and Saviour, and rightly worshiped by the Christian Church.

I. The Theory of Imposture

50. As Attributed to Christ.—The hypothesis of imposture is so revolting to moral as well as common sense, that its mere statement is its condemnation. It was invented by the Jews who crucified the Lord to cover their crime, but has never been seriously carried out, and no scholar of any decency and self-respect would now dare to profess it openly. How, in the name of logic, common sense, and experience, could an impostor

—that is, a deceitful, selfish, depraved man—have invented, and consistently maintained from beginning to end, the purest and noblest character known in history with the most perfect air of truth and reality? How could he have conceived and successfully carried out a plan of unparalleled beneficence, moral magnitude, and sublimity, and sacrificed his own life for it, in the face of the strongest prejudices of his people and age?

51. As Attributed to the Disciples.—The difficulty is not much lessened by shifting the charge of fraud from Christ to his disciples, who were said by the lying Sanhedrin to have stolen his body and thus humbugged the world (Matt. 28:13). But the Apostles and Evangelists were anything but designing hypocrites and deceivers, and leave upon every reader the impression of an artless simplicity and honesty rarely equaled and never surpassed by any writers, learned or unlearned, of ancient or modern times. What imaginable motive could have induced them to engage in such a wicked scheme, when they knew that the whole world would persecute them even to death? How could they have formed and sustained a conspiracy for such a purpose, without ever falling out, or betraying themselves by some inconsistent word or act?

And who can seriously believe for a moment that the Christian Church for these eighteen hundred years, now embracing nearly the whole civilized world, and among them the strongest intellects and the noblest hearts—divines, philosophers, poets, orators, statesmen, and benefactors of the race—could have been duped and fooled by a Galilean carpenter, or by a dozen illiterate fishermen? Verily, this lowest form of infidelity is the grossest insult to all sound reason and sense, and to the dignity of human nature.

II. The Theory of Enthusiasm or Self-Deception

52. That Christ Himself Was Deceived.—The hypothesis of enthusiasm or self-deception, though less disreputable, is equally unreasonable, in view of the uniform clearness, calmness, self-possession, humility, dignity, and patience of Christ,—qualities the very opposite of those which characterize an enthusiast. We might imagine a Jew of that age to have fancied himself the Messiah and the Son of God; but instead of opposing all the popular notions, and discouraging all the temporal hopes of his countrymen, he would, like Barcochba of a later period, have headed a rebellion against the hated tyranny of the Romans, and endeavored to establish a temporal kingdom. Enthusiasm, which in this case must have bordered on madness itself, instead of calmly and patiently bearing the malignant opposition of the leaders of the nation, would have broken out in violent passion and precipitate action.

Christ's intellect is truly marvelous. He never erred in his judgment of men and things; he was never deceived by appearances; he penetrated through the surface, and always went straight to the heart and marrow; he never asked a question which was not perfectly appropriate; he never gave an answer which was not fully to the point, or which could be better conceived and expressed. How often did he silence his cavilers, the shrewd and cunning priests and scribes, by a short sentence which hit the nail on the head, or struck like lightning into their conscience, or wisely evaded the trap laid for him! When the Pharisees and Herodians, with the malicious intention to entangle him into their political party quarrels, asked him whether it was lawful to

pay taxes to the Roman government, he, perceiving their wickedness, called for a denarius with the superscription of the Roman emperor, and said: "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and unto God the things that are God's." This word, which settles, in principle, the whole vexed question between Church and State, may be called the wisest answer ever given by any man. When the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, laid before him a perplexing question concerning the marriage relation in the future state, he solved the difficulty by removing all foundation for it; and then, appealing to the very part of the Old Testament which they professed to believe, to the exclusion of the later parts of the canon, he asked them: "Have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? *God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.*" By this short comment he opened the profound meaning of this title of God, which no one had seen in it before, but which, being once brought to light, was so clear and transparent that even the Sadducees were silenced and the multitude astonished. And when the sanctimonious hypocrites, in the case of the adulterous woman, hoped to involve him in a contradiction with the rigor of the law, he brought the matter home to their own conscience by saying: "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her;" and they, "being convicted by their own conscience, went out one by one, beginning at the eldest, even unto the last." Christ never lost the balance of mind under excitement, nor the clearness of vision under embarrassment; he never violated the most perfect good taste in any of his sayings.

Is such an intellect—clear as the sky, bracing as the

mountain air, sharp and penetrating as a sword, thoroughly healthy and vigorous, always ready and always self-possessed—liable to a radical and most serious delusion concerning his own character and mission? Preposterous imagination!

Let us hear the most eminent Unitarian divine on this hypothesis:—

"The charge," says Dr. Channing, "of an extravagant, self-deluding enthusiasm is the last to be fastened on Jesus. Where can we find the traces of it in his history? Do we detect them in the calm authority of his precepts; in the mild, practical, and beneficent spirit of his religion; in the unlabored simplicity of the language with which he unfolds his high powers and the sublime truths of religion; or in the good sense, the knowledge of human nature, which he always discovers in his estimate and treatment of the different classes of men with whom he acted? Do we discover this enthusiasm in the singular fact, that whilst he claimed power in the future world, and always turned men's minds to heaven, he never indulged his own imagination, or stimulated that of his disciples, by giving vivid pictures or any minute description of that unseen state? The truth is, that, remarkable as was the character of Jesus, it was distinguished by nothing more than by calmness and self-possession. This trait pervades his other excellences. How calm was his piety! Point me, if you can, to one vehement, passionate expression of his religious feelings. Does the Lord's Prayer breathe a feverish enthusiasm? . . . His benevolence, too, though singularly earnest and deep, was composed and serene. He never lost the possession of himself in his sympathy with others; was never hurried into the impatient and rash enterprises of an enthusiastic philanthropy; but did good with the

tranquillity and constancy which mark the providence of God."

53. That the Evangelists Were Deceived.—The hypothesis of delusion may be shifted from Christ to the Apostles and Evangelists. It may be supposed that they honestly mistook an extraordinary man for a divine being, and extraordinary medical cures for supernatural miracles.

This is the view of the older *rationalistic* or the *natural* interpretation, so called, of the gospel history. It forms a parallel to the heathen rationalism of Euhemerus, of the Cyrenaic school: he explained the gods of the Greek mythology as human sages, heroes, kings, and tyrants, whose superior knowledge or great deeds secured them divine honors and the hero-worship of posterity.

The rationalistic explanation, after having been tried first, by Eichhorn and others, with the miracles of the Old Testament, was fully developed and applied to the gospel-history, with an unusual degree of patient and painstaking learning and acumen, by H. E. G. Paulus, of Heidelberg.[36]

This German Euhemerus takes the gospel-history as actual history; but, by a critical separation of what he calls *fact* from what he calls *judgment* of the actor or narrator, he explains it exclusively from natural causes, and thus brings it down to the level of every-day experience. Jesus was indeed a wise, noble, and virtuous Rabbi, who distinguished himself above all his contemporaries by works of philanthropy, medical skill, perhaps

[36] Dr. Paulus was born at Leonberg, in the kingdom of Württemberg, 1761; was successively professor in different universities; at last in Heidelberg, where he died in 1851. His rationalistic exegesis is laid down in his *Commentary on the Gospels,* published since 1800; and in his *Life of Jesus,* 1828.

also magnetic cures, and exerted an uncommon influence upon the heart. But the supernatural events related by the Evangelists, and sincerely believed by them, are erroneous conceptions and innocent amplifications of historical facts which fall within the sphere of the laws of nature. Sometimes the fault lies only in the reader or interpreter, and the supposed miracle turns out to be a grammatical blunder; as, for example, when Christ's "walking on the sea" (Matt. 14: 25), which means simply his walking *on the bank* of the sea, or *on the high shore* above the sea,—a very easy and natural performance indeed!—is turned into a walking *on the surface* of the sea, or *over* the sea. In most cases the mistake originated with the first observers.

This interpretation, which claims to be "natural," turns out to be very unnatural, and contradicts the context, the laws of hermeneutics, and common sense itself. Its exposition is wretched imposition.

It is only necessary to give some specimens from the exegesis of Paulus and his school.

The glory of the Lord, which, in the night of his birth, shone around the shepherds, was simply an *ignis fatuus*, or a meteor, or a lantern which was flashed in their eyes. The miracle at Christ's baptism may be easily reduced to thunder and lightning, and a sudden disappearance of the clouds. The tempter in the wilderness was a cunning Pharisee, but was mistaken by the Evangelists for the devil, who does not exist, except in the imagination of the superstitious. The quieting of the storm on the lake might be traced to a happy accident, in connection with the calmness and dignity of Jesus. His miraculous cures turn out, on closer examination, to be simply deeds of philanthropy, or of medical skill, or of good luck. Thus the healing of the blind was

accomplished through an efficacious powder applied to the eye,—a circumstance which was unnoticed by the miracle-loving reporters. The coin for the payment of tribute was to be obtained by Peter, not in the mouth of the fish, but by selling the fish in the market. The changing of water into wine was an innocent and benevolent wedding-joke; and the delusion of the company, by the sudden appearance of the wine previously provided by the disciples, must be charged on the twilight, not upon Christ. The feeding of the five thousand is easily explained by provisions which the people brought with them in their pockets; Jesus advising the rich to share their abundance with the poor. The daughter of Jairus, the youth of Nain, Lazarus, and Jesus himself, were raised, not from real death, but simply from a trance or swoon. The angels of the resurrection were nothing more nor less than the white linen clothes which the pious mistook for celestial beings. And, finally, the ascension of our Lord resolves itself into his sudden disappearance behind a cloud that accidentally intervened between him and his disciples.

And yet these very Evangelists, who, according to this most unnatural "natural exegesis," must have been destitute of the most ordinary talent of observation, and even of common sense, contrived to paint a character and to write a story, which, in sublimity and interest, throw the productions of the proudest historians into the shade and have exerted an irresistible charm upon Christendom for these eighteen hundred years!

No wonder that those absurdities of a misguided learning and ingenuity hardly survived their author. It is a decided merit of Strauss, that he, in his larger work on the *Life of Jesus*, has thoroughly and step by step refuted the system of his predecessor, and given

it the critical death-blow. He very properly says: "If the Gospels are taken to be historical documents, the miracle cannot be expelled from them." Therefore, to get rid of it, he denies their historical character and apostolic origin. Renan too, in his "Essay on the Critical Historians of Jesus," speaks quite contemptuously of this "very narrow exegesis of rationalism," this "shabby method of interpretation," "an exegesis made up of subtilties founded on the mechanical use of a few incidents,—ecstasy, lightning, storm, cloud," etc.; and says: "The so-called rationalistic interpretation may have satisfied the first bold desire of the human mind on its taking possession of a long-forbidden domain; but experience could not but disclose very soon the inexcusable defects, the dryness, the coarseness of it. Never was better realized the ingenious allegory of the daughters of Minos, who were turned into bats for having seriously criticised the vulgar credences. There is as much simplicity and credulity, and much less poetry, in clumsily discussing a legend in its details, as in accepting it, once for all, as it is." [37]

So one infidel refutes the other, and by the very process undermines his own system. Strauss and Renan have fared no better than Paulus, who was their equal in learning and acumen.

III. The Theory of Poetical Fiction

The least dishonorable, and the most plausible, of the false theories of the life of Christ, is the hypothesis of poetical fiction. This may, again, assume two forms, —the *mythical* and the *legendary*. The former derives

[37] Renan, *Studies of Religious History and Criticism*, translated by O. B. Frothingham, pp. 176, 177. New York, 1864.

its support mainly from the formation of the ancient myths of heathen gods and demigods; the latter, from the medieval legends of Christian martyrs and saints.

The one was matured and carried out by David Friedrich Strauss, with the patient research, learning, and solidity of a German scholar; the other, by Joseph Ernest Renan, with the brilliancy, elegancy, and levity of a Parisian novelist. The one was written for students, the other for the people; the one breathes the air of a library, is cold and heartless, the other arose under the fresh impressions of travel in the Holy Land, as a fifth Gospel, broken, ruined, yet legible, and is enlivened by picturesque sketches; the one rests on the philosophical basis of a speculative or logical pantheism, the other on that of a sentimental or poetical pantheism. Strauss's *Leben Jesu* is related to Renan's *Vie de Jésus* as the heavy armor of a medieval knight to the parade uniform of a holiday soldier, as a siege cannon to a popgun, as an iron statue to a tawdry wax figure; but both start essentially from the same naturalistic premises and arrive at the same conclusions. They are equally opposed to the miraculous and supernatural in the life of our Saviour, and leave a mere spectral shadow of the real Jesus of the Gospels.

54. The Mythical Hypothesis.—Dr. Strauss [38] wrote two works on the life of Jesus: a large one for scholars, which appeared first in 1835, in two volumes; and a condensed one of a more popular character, in 1864, in one volume. In both he maintains the same theory, with unimportant modifications. The former work is the ablest and most elaborate attack upon the gospel history

[38] David Friedrich Strauss, Doctor of Philosophy, was born January 27, 1808, at Ludwigsburg, near Stuttgart, in Württemberg. He died in his native town, Ludwigsburg, 1874.

ever made, and a well-arranged storehouse of all the older arguments of infidelity.

Strauss has found an eloquent advocate in the erratic genius and misguided philanthropist, Theodore Parker, who passed like a brilliant meteor over the American skies to disappear in a foreign land.[39]

What Gabler, Vater, De Wette, and other critics, had already done with the miracles of the Old Testament and some portions of the New, Strauss has fully matured and systematically carried out with reference to the whole life of Christ. He sinks the gospel history, as to the mode of its origin and reality, substantially to a par with the ancient mythologies of Greece and Rome.

A myth is the representation of a religious idea or truth in the form of a fictitious narrative. In this respect it resembles the fable and the parable, but differs from both by blending the idea with the fact, without any consciousness of a difference between them. The fable is a fictitious story, based upon palpable impossibilities,—as thinking and speaking animals,—and invented for the express purpose of inculcating some moral maxim or lesson of prudence; the parable is likewise a fictitious narrative, deliberately produced but based upon possibilities, and thus intrinsically truthful, for the purpose of illustrating a spiritual truth; a myth is unconsciously produced with the most simple and unreflecting faith in the actual occurrence of the story. The mytho-poetic faculty presupposes—and this, we may remark, by way of anticipation, is a telling argument against the theory of Strauss—a childlike age of the human race, an entire absence of reflection and criticism. It works like the imagination of children, who

[39] Theodore Parker, born in Massachusetts, 1810; died in Florence, 1860.

delight in stories, invent stories, and believe their own stories without the least misgiving or doubt, without raising the question of truth or falsehood. In this way (according to the theory of some distinguished classical scholars like Ottfried Müller and Grote) the Greek mythology took its rise, as the spontaneous growth of a childlike fancy, which peopled the air and the sea, the mountains and the groves, the trees and the brooks with divinities, in the fullest belief in their actual existence. So, also, much of the legendary history of medieval Christianity can be accounted for without impeaching the motives or honesty of the narrator, yet with this difference, that the legends of martyrs and saints have, in most cases, some foundation in a psychological state or historical fact. The rest is either harmless poetry of simple souls, or pious fraud of designing monks and priests.

Strauss does not deny by any means the historical existence of Jesus. He even admits him to have been a religious genius of the first magnitude. But from pantheistic premises, and by a cold process of hypercritical dissection of the apparently contradictory accounts of the witnesses, he resolves all the supernatural and miraculous elements of Christ's person and history, from his birth to the resurrection and ascension, into myths, or imaginative representations of religious ideas in the form of facts, which were honestly believed by the authors to have actually occurred. The ideas symbolized in these facts, especially the idea of the essential unity of the divine and human, are declared to be true in the abstract as applied to humanity as a whole; but denied in the concrete, or in their application to an individual. The fulness of the infinite godhead is diffused, as it were, throughout the whole universe, but cannot

be shut up in Jesus of Nazareth or any single person. The authorship of the evangelical myths is ascribed to the primitive Christian community, pregnant with Jewish Messianic hopes, and kindled to hero-worship by the appearance of the extraordinary person of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they took to be the promised Messiah, and adorned with this innocent poetry of miracles within thirty or forty years after his death.

The theory may be reduced to the following syllogism: There was a fixed idea in the Jewish mind, nourished by the Old Testament writings, that the Messiah would perform certain miracles—heal the sick, raise the dead, etc.; there was a strong persuasion in the minds of the disciples of Jesus that he actually was the promised Messiah; therefore the mytho-poetic faculty instinctively invented the miracles corresponding to the Messianic conception, and ascribed them to him.

In the execution of his task, Strauss avails himself, at the same time, of all the difficulties and objections which the ingenuity of unbelievers of opposite philosophical tendencies, from Celsus and Porphyry to Reimarus and Paulus, have urged against the credibility of the gospel narrative; grouping them with consummate skill for rhetorical effect; presenting the most complex details with rare clearness; changing his mode of attack from round assertion to cautious insinuation or suggestive inquiry, and then massing his forces for a final assault upon the citadel, against which the gates of hell shall never prevail.

55. Theory Examined.—Let us now proceed to examine the general features and defects of this theory.

First, The philosophic foundation on which the mythical hypothesis professedly rests, is the alleged impossibility of a miracle; and this again has its root in a

pantheistic denial of a personal God and an Almighty Maker of heaven and earth. But this fundamental principle is a mere assumption, which the author never attempts to prove. It is a *petitio principii*, and begs the very question which it was one of his first duties to discuss. Much as he boasted of possessing freedom from doctrinal prepossessions as a first prerequisite for a scientific biography of Jesus, he starts with a philosophical prejudice, which is fatal to historical impartiality, and sacrifices facts to theory.

Secondly, The critical foundation of the mythical theory is as unsafe as the philosophical, and is one of the weakest parts of the book of Strauss, who was justly censured by Dr. Baur for attempting to write a criticism of the gospel history without a criticism of the Gospels. In order to avoid the necessity of supposing that Christ and the apostles were deceivers or self-deceived, and to allow a sufficient time for the formation of myths, he must bring down the canonical Gospels at least a century later than Christ. But at that time they were already acknowledged as canonical writings, and used in the Christian churches. Strauss has to encounter here the overwhelming mass of patristic testimonies in favor of the apostolic origin of these Gospels, which are far better supported than any of the classical writers of Greece or Rome.

At one time, feeling the force of the unanimous voice of Christian antiquity, Strauss was disposed to admit the authenticity of the Gospel of John; but seeing the fatal effect of this concession upon his conclusions, he soon after withdrew it (in the third edition of his large work), and Baur and the whole Tübingen school came to his aid in disputing the authorship of John, notwithstanding the additional external evidence in favor of it

which has since been brought to light by the discovery of the *Philosophumena* of Hippolitus; from which it appears that the fourth Gospel was already used by Gnostic heretics in the early part of the second century. The controversy concerning the origin and character of the canonical Gospels, into which we cannot here enter, has assumed half-a-dozen new phases since the first appearance of Strauss's book in 1835, and is still in an unsettled condition. We may never be able to determine the precise origin of the Gospels and their mutual relations, but Christ's teaching and Christ's example remain an undoubted fact, and they cannot possibly be the invention of illiterate fishermen of Galilee. As to the fourth Gospel, the only alternative in the present stage of the controversy is truth, or fraud. The assumption of an unconscious mytho-poetical fiction is exploded by the later developments of the Tübingen critics. Strauss himself now admits, in this case, *conscious* fiction and philosophical construction, and thus approaches the very border of the infamous theory of imposture.

But suppose we give up the four Gospels: there still remain the Acts and the Epistles of the New Testament to substantiate all the fundamental facts of the life of Christ, especially the resurrection,—the great crowning and sealing miracle of his work, without which the Apostolic Church could never have risen at all. Even Dr. Baur, who in bold negative and reconstructive criticism went further than any skeptic ever did, and who resolved most of the New Testament writing into "tendency" books written in the conscious interest of contending parties and sections of the post-apostolic age, ultimately blended in the system of ancient Catholicism,—a theory, by the way, which overthrows the unconscious mytho-poetic origin of the Gospels,—leaves the Apoca-

lypse of St. John, and four Epistles of St. Paul, viz., those to the Romans (excepting the last two chapters), the Corinthians and Galatians, standing as genuine apostolic writings. This is enough for our purpose. It may perhaps be imagined that an illiterate fisherman of Galilee was simple and childlike enough to invent miracles, and to mistake the creatures of his fancy for actual facts. But this is a psychological impossibility in the case of Paul,—the learned, acute, subtle, dialectic, well-drilled rabbi of the school of Gamaliel, and so long the open and bitter enemy of Christianity. How could he submit his strong and clear mind, and devote all the energies of his noble life, which made him one of the greatest benefactors of mankind, to a poetical fiction or empty dream of the very sect which he fanatically persecuted unto death?

56. An Insurmountable Difficulty.—The difficulty presented here to the infidel biographers of Jesus is absolutely insurmountable; the mythological hypothesis breaks down completely on the rock of the resurrection, and the conversion of Paul which is based upon it. Strauss must admit that Paul and all the apostles believed in the resurrection, and could only by this belief pass from the despondency created by the death of Jesus to the joy and enthusiasm necessary to spread the gospel and found churches at the risk of their lives. But he cannot explain this astounding transition which took place already on the third day. He very ably refutes as utterly untenable the natural interpretation of a resurrection from a mere trance, followed after a short period of a sickly existence by real death, which would have effectually destroyed again all the hopes of the disciples. Instead of this, he resorts to the hypothesis of a purely subjective resurrection of Christ in the

visionary faith of his disciples, including St. Paul, and the more than five hundred to whom he appeared at once (1 Cor. 15: 6). As if an empty dream could suddenly turn desponding gloom into enthusiastic joy and world-conquering faith, and this in so many persons at the same time, and lay the foundation to the indestructible structure of the Christian Church! *Credat Judæus Apella!* It is certainly much easier to believe that Christ truly rose from the dead, than that the Christian Church—the greatest institution of history—should have arisen from a deception or a lie.

Here, if anywhere, we must bow before the overwhelming force of a most glorious fact. Dr. Baur, the teacher of Strauss, and his superior in learning and critical power, felt the difficulty, and toward the close of his life made the honest concession, that the conversion of Paul was to him a mystery, which could only be explained by "the miracle of the resurrection." This concession overthrows the whole mythical fabric. Admit the resurrection of Christ, and there can be no difficulty with the other miracles.

57. Inversion of Natural Order.—A third fundamental error of the mythical hypothesis consists in a radical inversion of the natural order and relation of history and poetry, as it exists in any historical age like that in which Christ made his appearance on earth. Facts give rise to songs, and not *vice versa*. Prophecies, and expectations too, may foreshadow events, but do not create them. The real object precedes the picture of the artist; the hero, the epic. Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* presupposes the Christian experience of which it is a beautiful allegory. Milton's *Paradise Lost* could never have produced the belief in the fall of man, but rests on this belief and the fact it describes with the charm and

splendor of sanctified genius. All the great revolutions in the world have been effected, not by fictitious personages, but by real living men whose power corresponds to their influence. So the American and French Revolutions in the eighteenth, the Puritan Revolution in the seventeenth, the Protestant Reformation in the sixteenth century; the founding of modern, medieval, and ancient empires; the inventions of arts, and the discoveries of new countries,—can all be traced to strictly historical and well-defined persons as originators or leaders. Why should Christianity, which produced the greatest of all moral revolutions of the race, form an exception? Ideas, without living men to represent and explain them, are shadows and abstractions. The pantheistic philosophy on which the criticism of Strauss and Renan is based, by denying the personality of God, destroys also the proper significance of the personality of man, and inevitably ends in denying the immortality of the soul.

In the case before us, the difficulty is greatly increased by making, not one great towering genius, as Homer, but an illiterate and comparatively ignorant multitude, responsible for the gospel poem, which in purity and sublimity rises infinitely above all ancient mythologies. Strauss assumes that a Messianic community in some *terra incognita*, probably in the midst of Palestine, independent of the apostles, about thirty or forty years after the death of Christ, produced the gospel history. But this is a mere fiction of his brain. At that time, Christianity was already planted all over the Roman Empire, as is evident from the Epistles of Paul as well as from the Acts; and all these congregations stood under the guidance of apostles and apostolic men who were eyewitnesses of the events of Christ, and controlled the whole Christian tradition. The Gospels,

moreover, with the exception of that of Matthew, bear not the Jewish, but the Gentile-Christian stamp, and were written outside of Palestine, on Greek and Roman soil; which shows that the same traditions were spread all over the empire, and form a part of the original Christianity of the apostles themselves. The mythological hypothesis breaks down half-way, and is forced to make the apostles responsible for the story; that is, to charge them with downright fraud. If Christ did not actually perform miracles, they must have been invented by the primitive disciples, the apostles, and evangelists, to account at all for their rapid and universal spread and acceptance among Jewish and Gentile Christians from Jerusalem to Rome.

But admitting such a consolidated, central, and yet independent mytho-poetic community of the second generation of Christians, how could this Messianic congregation itself originate without a Messiah? How could the disciples believe in Jesus, without the indispensable signs of the Messiahship? If the early Christians produced Christ, who produced the early Christians? Whence did they derive their high spiritual ideal? Were not the Messianic expectations of the Jews at the time sectional, political, and carnal,—the very reverse of those encouraged by Christ? Who ever heard of a poem unconsciously produced by a mixed multitude, and honestly mistaken by them all for actual history? How could the five hundred persons, to whom the risen Saviour is said to have appeared (1 Cor. 15: 6), dream the same dream at the same time, and then believe it as a veritable fact, at the risk of their lives? How could such an illusion stand the combined hostility of the Jewish and heathen world, and the searching criticism of an age, not of childlike simplicity, but of high civilization, of

critical reflection,—even of incredulity and skepticism? How strange, that unlettered and unskilled fishermen, or rather their obscure friends and pupils, and not the philosophers and poets of classic Greece and Rome, should have composed such a grand poem, and painted a character to whom Strauss himself is forced to assign the very first rank among all the religious geniuses and founders of religion! And would they not rather have given us at best an improved picture of such a rabbi as Hillel or Gamaliel, or of a prophet like Elijah or John the Baptist, instead of a universal reformer who rises above all the limitations of nation or sect?

The poets must in this case have been superior to the hero. St. John must have surpassed Jesus, whom he represented as the incarnate God. And yet the hero is admitted by the skeptics themselves to be the purest and greatest man that ever lived!

58. Contrary to Facts.—But where are the traces of a fervid imagination and mytho-poetic art in the gospel history? Is it not, on the contrary, remarkably free from all rhetorical and poetical ornament, from every admixture of subjective notions and feelings, even from the expression of sympathy, admiration, and praise? The writers evidently felt that the story speaks best for itself, and could not be improved by the art and skill of man. Their discrepancies, which at best do not affect the picture of Christ's character in the least, but only the subordinate details of his history, prove the absence of collusion, attest the honesty of their intentions, and confirm the general credibility of their accounts. The Gospels have the character of originality and freshness stamped upon every page; they breathe the very presence of Jesus Christ; and this constitutes their irresistible charm to every unsophisticated reader.

It is the history itself which speaks to us face to face, without intervening reflections and subjective notions. The few occasional references to geography, archeology, and secular history, only confirm their general credibility. How different in all these respects the apocryphal Gospels! They are flat, puerile, insipid, the absurd productions of a diseased religious imagination. Here, indeed, we might speak of mythical or legendary fiction, or of downright imposition and pious fraud. But this very contrast proves the truth of the original history, as the counterfeit implies the existence of the genuine coin.

The mere fact of the Christian Church, with its unbroken history of eighteen hundred years, is an overwhelming evidence of the Christ of the Gospels; and the institution of Christian baptism and the holy communion testify every day, all over the world, to the two fundamental doctrines of the holy Trinity, and of the atonement by the sacrifice on the cross.

Strauss would make us believe in a stream without a fountain, in a house without a foundation, in an effect without a cause; for the facts which he and Renan leave untouched are not sufficient to account for the extraordinary and continued results.

The same negative criticism which Strauss applied to the Evangelists, would, with equal plausibility, destroy the strongest chain of evidence before a court of justice, and resolve the life of Socrates or Charlemagne or Luther or Napoleon into a mythical dream.

The secret spring of this hypercriticism is the pantheistic or atheistic denial of a personal, living God, which consistently and professedly ends with the denial of personal immortality; for the relative personality of man depends upon the self-conscious, self-existent, abso-

lute personality of God. In its details, the mythical hypothesis is so complicated and artificial, that it cannot be consistently carried out. It continually crosses the boundary-line which divides the mythical from the mendacious; and at the most critical points, as in the origin of the fourth Gospel and the miracle of the resurrection, it is driven to the alternative of admitting the truth, or relapsing to the vulgar and disreputable hypothesis of intentional fraud, from which it professed, at the start, to shrink back with horror and contempt.

59. The Legendary Hypothesis.—Renan [40] has eclipsed all former infidel biographers of Christ, so far as popularity and ephemeral effect is concerned. His *Life of Jesus*, which first appeared in 1863, has had all the success of a sensational novel, and will share the same fate. In disposing of it, we can be much briefer, since a refutation of Strauss is also a refutation of Renan.

He essentially agrees with Strauss, to whom he expressly refers as his main authority for critical research; but he has a better appreciation of the realness and environments of the gospel history. He correctly remarks that the term *myths* is better applicable to India and primitive Greece than to the ancient traditions of the Hebrews and the Semitic nations in general. He prefers the words *legend* and *legendary narratives*, "which, while they concede a large influence to the working of opinions, allow the action and the personal character of Jesus to stand out in their completeness." [41] A myth is purely imaginative; a legend has a nucleus of fact. As Strauss expresses the difference: "Myth is

[40] Joseph Ernest Renan was born Feb. 27, 1823, at Treguier in Brittany, and died in 1892.

[41] Renan, *Studies of Religious History and Criticism*, translated by O. B. Frothingham, New York, 1864, p. 189.

the creation of fact out of an idea; legend is the seeing an idea in a fact." This brings the gospel history down to a level with the history of Francis of Assisi, and other marvelous saints of the Roman Church; although Renan, inconsistently enough, prefers a parallel between the myth of his favorite Sakya-Muni, the founder of Buddhism, and the legend of Jesus, and thus falls back again to the mythical theory. He regards the so-called legend of Jesus as the fruit of the consentaneous enthusiasm and imaginative impulse of the primitive disciples. No great event in history has passed without a cycle of fables; and Jesus could not, had he wished, have silenced these popular creations.

Renan, moreover, differs from Strauss by admitting the essential authenticity of the chief portion of the four Gospels, including even the most contested of all, that of John,—a concession almost as fatal to his own as to the mythical theory, and hence pronounced by Strauss the one essential error of Renan. He consequently allows a larger body of facts in the life of Christ. He undertakes, to some extent, the task of reconstruction, and proposes to clothe the cloudy phantom and dim shadow of the mythical Jesus with real flesh and blood. In his essay on the "Critical Historians of Jesus," he quotes with approbation the objection of Colani to Strauss: "No doubt the apostles, once believing in the Messianic character of Jesus, may have added to his actual image some lineaments borrowed from prophecy; but how came they to believe in his Messianic character? Strauss has never explained this. What he leaves of the Gospels is insufficient as ground for the apostles' faith; and it is useless to ascribe to them a disposition to be content with the *minimum* of proof; the proofs must needs have been very strong to overcome the crush-

ing doubts occasioned by the death on the cross. In other words, the person of Jesus must have singularly surpassed ordinary proportions; a large part of the evangelical narratives must be true."

Renan's *Life of Jesus* is interspersed with truly eloquent and enthusiastic tributes to Jesus,—concessions which must either overthrow his whole legendary hypothesis, or else resolve themselves into empty declamation. So far, we may regard the French child as an improvement on its German parent, and a progress in the skeptical world toward the acknowledgment of the truth.

59a. **Hostile to Miracles.**—But while Renan, aided by a lively French imagination, and a fresh contemplation of the Holy Land, which he calls the "Fifth Gospel," surpasses Strauss in the estimate of the historical character of the gospel-record, he is equally hostile to miracles, which, in his oracular opinion, "always imply imposture or fraud;" and falls far below him on the score of scholarship, consistency, and even morality. We mean, of course, the morality of his theory, and have nothing to do with the morality of his private character, which may be without reproach. Compared with this critical master, Renan is a mere dilettante and a charlatan. He nowhere makes a serious attempt to prove any of his novel and arbitrary positions, refers for detail, once for all, to Strauss and half-a-dozen inferior infidel books, ignores their refutation, and deals in oracular assertions and eloquent declamations for artistic effect. His book nowhere rises to the dignity of solid science and scholarship. It is essentially a religious novel, with Jesus as the hero, adapted to the taste of the fashionable world.

According to Renan, Jesus was born at Nazareth

(not at Bethlehem), but assumed the title of Son of David as a necessary condition of success. He grew up amidst the charming scenery of Galilee, an ignorant peasant of extraordinary genius and spotless virtue. He was a "delicious" Rabbi, of ravishing beauty, a preacher of the purest code of morals, and a healer of many diseases of body and mind.

Renan's Jesus is the most contradictory and impossible character ever conceived. There are many happy and unhappy inconsistencies in the world, and even great and good men sometimes combine conflicting traits of character. But there is a great difference between inconsistencies and contradictions; and not until all the laws of logic and psychology are overthrown, not until fire and water dwell together in peace, will sensible people believe that one and the same person can be a sentimentalist, an enthusiast, a fanatic, an impostor, a wise and charming rabbi, an unequaled saint, and an incarnate God. The Christ of the Gospels requires faith; the Jesus of Renan, the utmost stretch of credulity. The Christ of history is a moral miracle; the Christ of romance, a moral monstrosity. Renan exposes himself to the combined force of the objections which have been urged against all the false theories of the gospel history. His self-contradictory picture of Jesus, divested of the meretricious charms of a brilliant style and sentimental hero-worship, is an insult to sound sense and the dignity of man. It rouses the noblest instincts of our nature to just indignation. To state it in its nakedness is to refute and to condemn it. Even as an artist he has failed in the main figure, since his hero lacks the essential quality of truthfulness of conception, unity, and consistency of character. This defect arises not from any want of artistic power of the author, which

he possesses in an eminent degree, but from a sort of inevitable judgment which must overtake every one who dares, with unclean hands, to draw the picture of the purest of the pure and the holiest of the holy.

CHAPTER XV

CONCLUSION

59b. **INFIDELITY EXHAUSTED.** Theories have been tried and found wanting. Strauss's attempted substitute rejected.

59c. **THE EVER-LIVING CHRIST.** The divine Man and incarnate God still lives. Jesus Christ shines forth with self-evidencing light. He solves the mystery of our being.

"*Nebicula est; transibit,*"—"It is a little cloud; it will pass away." This was said by Athanasius of Julian the Apostate, who, after a short reign of active hostility to Christianity, perished with a confession of utter failure.[42] The same may be applied to all the recent attempts to undermine the faith of humanity in the person of its divine Lord and Saviour. The clouds, great and small, pass away; the sun continues to shine; darkness has its hour; the light is eternal. No argument against the existence or attack upon the character of the sun will drive the king of day from the sky, or prevent him from blessing the earth. And the eye of man, with its sunlike nature, will ever turn to the sun, and drink the rays of light as they emanate from the face of Jesus,

[42] The dying exclamation of Julian the Apostate—"Galilean, thou hast conquered!"—rests on too late authorities to claim credibility, especially in view of the silence of the impartial Ammianus Marcellinus, who furnishes a full account of the last hours of the emperor, but it contains the philosophy of his reign.

the "Light of the World." "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4: 4).

59b. **Infidelity Exhausted.**—With its last and ablest efforts, infidelity seems to have exhausted its scientific resources. It could only repeat itself hereafter. Its different theories have been tried, and found wanting. One has in turn refuted and superseded the other, even during the lifetime of their champions. They explain nothing in the end: on the contrary, they only substitute an unnatural prodigy for a supernatural miracle, an inextricable enigma for a revealed mystery. They equally tend to undermine all faith in God's providence, in history, and ultimately in every principle of truth and virtue; and they deprive a poor and fallen humanity, in a world of sin, temptation, and sorrow, of its only hope and comfort in life and in death.

Dr. Strauss, the most learned of the infidel biographers of Jesus, seems to have had a passing feeling of the disastrous tendency of his work of destruction, and the awful responsibility he assumed. "The results of our inquiry," he says in the closing chapter of his large *Life of Jesus*, "have apparently annihilated the greatest and most important part of that which the Christian has been wont to believe concerning his Jesus; have uprooted all the encouragements which he has derived from his faith, and deprived him of all his consolations. The boundless stores of truth and life which for eighteen hundred years have been the aliment of humanity seem irretrievably devastated, the most sublime leveled with the dust, God divested of his grace, man of his dignity, and the tie between heaven and earth broken. Piety turns away with horror from so fearful

an act of desecration, and, strong in the impregnable self-evidence of its faith, boldly pronounces that—let an audacious criticism attempt what it will—all that the Scriptures declare and the Church believes of Christ will still subsist as eternal truth; nor need one iota of it be renounced." Strauss makes then an attempt, it is true, at a philosophical reconstruction of what he vainly imagines to have annihilated as a historical fact by his sophistical criticism. He professes to admit the abstract truth of the orthodox Christology, or the union of the divine and human, but perverts it into a purely intellectual and pantheistic meaning. He refuses divine attributes and honors to the glorious Head of the race, but applies them to a decapitated humanity. He thus substitutes, from pantheistic prejudice, a metaphysical abstraction for a living reality; a mere notion for an historical fact; a progress in philosophy and mechanical arts for the moral victory over sin and death; a pantheistic hero-worship, or self-adoration of a fallen race, for the worship of the only true and living God; the gift of a stone for the nourishing bread; a gospel of despair and final annihilation for the gospel of hope and eternal life.

Humanity scorns such a miserable substitute, which has yet to give the first proof of any power for good, and which is not likely ever to convert or improve a single individual. Humanity must have a living Head, a real Lord and Saviour from sin and death. With renewed faith and stronger confidence, it will return from the dreary desolations of a heartless infidelity, and the vain conceits of a philosophy falsely so called, to the historical Christ, the promised Messiah, the God incarnate, and will exclaim with Peter: "Lord, where shall we go but to thee? Thou alone hast the words of

eternal life, and we believe and are sure that thou art the Son of God!"

59c. **The Ever-living Christ.**—Yes! He still lives, the divine Man and incarnate God, on the ever-fresh and self-authenticating records of the Gospels, in the unbroken history of nineteen centuries, and in the hearts and lives of the wisest and best of our race; and there he will live forever. His person and work are the Book of Life, which will never grow old. Christianity lives and will continue to live with him, because he lives, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever.

Jesus Christ is the most sacred, the most glorious, the most certain of all facts; arrayed in a beauty and majesty which throw the "starry heavens above us and the moral law within us" into obscurity, and fill us truly with ever-growing reverence and awe. He shines forth with the self-evidencing light of the noonday sun. He is too great, too pure, too perfect, to have been invented by any sinful and erring man. His character and claims are confirmed by the sublimest doctrine, the purest ethics, the mightiest miracles, the grandest spiritual kingdom, and are daily and hourly exhibited in the virtues and graces of all who yield to the regenerating and sanctifying power of his spirit and example. The historical Christ meets and satisfies all moral and religious aspirations. The soul, if left to its noblest impulses and aspirations, instinctively turns to him, as the needle to the magnet, as the flower to the sun, as the panting hart to the fresh fountain. We are made for him, and "our heart is without rest until it rests in him." He commands our assent, he wins our affections and adoration. We cannot look upon him without spiritual benefit. We cannot think of him without being elevated above all that is low and mean, and encouraged

to all that is good and noble. The very hem of his garment is healing to the touch. One hour spent in his communion outweighs all the pleasures of sin. He is the most precious gift of a merciful God to a fallen world. In him are the treasures of wisdom, in him the fountain of pardon and peace, in him the only hope and comfort in this world and that which is to come. Mankind could better afford to lose the literature of Greece and Rome, of Germany and France, of England and America, than the story of Jesus of Nazareth. Without him, history is a dreary waste, a labyrinth of facts without meaning, connection, and aim: with him, it is a beautiful, harmonious revelation of God, the unfolding of a plan of infinite wisdom and love; all ancient history converges to his coming, all modern history receives from him its higher life and inspiration. He is the glory of the past, the life of the present, the hope of the future. We cannot even understand ourselves without him. According to an old Jewish proverb: "The secret of man is the secret of the Messiah." Christ is the great central Light of history, and, at the same time, the Light of every soul: he alone can solve the mystery of our being, and fulfil our intellectual desires after truth, our moral aspirations after goodness and holiness, and the longing of our feelings after peace and happiness.

Not for all the wealth and wisdom of this world would I weaken the faith of the humblest Christian in his divine Lord and Saviour; but, if, by the grace of God, I could convert a single skeptic to a childlike faith in him who lived and died for me and for all, I would feel that I had not lived in vain.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

IMPARTIAL TESTIMONIES TO THE CHARACTER OF CHRIST

We present, by way of Appendix, a number of striking and remarkable concessions and testimonies to the perfection of Christ's character as a man, from eminent persons who were either professed unbelievers and skeptics, or, at least, free from dogmatic bias, and can therefore not be suspected of partiality. This makes their testimony all the more valuable for apologetic purposes. It is the homage of their genius and intellect to him whose power and authority they must acknowledge theoretically, though they may practically refuse to accept him as their Lord and Saviour. The concession of an enemy, or an outsider, sometimes carries more weight in an argument than the assertion of a friend.

These testimonies are important and interesting. They prove that there is in the inmost heart of man an instinctive and growing reverence and admiration for the spotless purity of Christ. Infidels may deny his miracles, but they cannot deny his power, or assail his character, without doing violence to the better feelings and aspirations of their own nature, and forfeiting all claim to the moral respect of their fellow men. It seems to be felt that he is, without controversy, the very best being that ever walked on this earth, and that an attack on his character is an attack on the honor and dignity of humanity itself. And this feeling and conviction become stronger and deeper as history advances. The impression of Christ upon the

world, far from losing ground, is gaining new strength with every stage of civilization, and controls even the best thinking of his enemies.

These testimonies expose also the glaring inconsistency of unbelief, in admitting the absolute purity and truthfulness of Christ, and yet refusing his own testimony concerning himself; in praising his perfection as a man, and yet denying his Divinity which he claims himself, and which alone can satisfactorily explain his human perfection in a universally imperfect world.

60. Pontius Pilate.—"When he [Pilate] was set down on the judgment-seat, his wife sent unto him, saying: Have thou nothing to do with *that just man;* for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.

"When Pilate saw that he could prevail [avail] nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying: I am innocent of the blood of this *just person;* see ye to it."—MATT. 27: 19, 24.

61. The Centurion.—"Now, when the centurion, and they that were with him watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying: *Truly this was the* [*a*] *Son of God.*"—MATT. 27: 54. Comp. MARK 15: 39.

"Now, when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying: *Certainly this was a righteous man.*"—LUKE 23: 47.

62. Judas Iscariot.—"Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again [brought back] the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying: *I have sinned, in that I have betrayed the innocent blood.*" —MATT. 27: 3, 4.

63. The Talmud, that immense depository of Jewish theology and jurisprudence, of Rabbinical wisdom and folly, embracing twelve large folio volumes, has very little to say about Christ and his religion, which is the fulfil-

ment of the Law and the Prophets, and without which the Old Testament is a sealed book.

The first part, called the *Mishna* (*i.e., Repetition,* viz., of the law), which comprehends the oral traditions and Rabbinical expositions of the law from about 400 before to about 200 after Christ's birth, ignores Christianity, although it includes the sayings of many Rabbins of the first century, and was composed, according to Dr. Jost, about the year 230, in the city of Tiberias, on the Lake of Galilee, the region where Jesus lived and taught.

The second part of the Talmud, called the *Gemara* (*i.e., Conclusion,* viz., of Rabbinical wisdom), or the Talmud proper, is a vast collection of the Rabbinical expositions of the Mishna, which again became a subject of investigation and interpretation. There are two Gemaras,—that of Jerusalem, compiled in Palestine about A.D. 390; and that of Babylon, compiled about A.D. 500, under the supervision of the Patriarch of Babylon. Both these Gemaras—the Palestinian and the Babylonian—allude to Jesus and the apostles, but very briefly, and in a bitter and malignant spirit; they admit the miracles of Jesus, but derive them from evil spirits, like the Pharisees in the Gospels. According to the Gemara, Jesus was the illegitimate son of Mary (a hairdresser), and a man variously called Stada, Pandera,[43] and Pappus (a soldier); learned the magical arts in Egypt, practised them in Palestine; and for this reason, as well as for seducing and instigating the Israelites, he was crucified on the day preceding the Passover. We have here evidently a malignant perversion and indirect admission of the facts of the supernatural conception, the flight to Egypt, the miracles, and the crucifixion of our Saviour.

[43] This Pandera, who figures also in the book of Celsus, and in *Toldoth Jeschu* (where he is called Joseph Pandera), is no doubt a name of hatred and contempt invented by the Jews, and means either *scourge;* or, like the Greek πάνδηρ, and the Latin *lupa,* it is synonymous with ravenous *lust,* and hence used as a symbolical name for adultery.

At a later period, the Jewish hatred of Christianity produced an infamous book, entitled *Toldoth Jeschu, i.e.,* the *Birth or History of Jesus,* where the Talmudic tradition, especially the wretched slander about the birth of our Saviour, and the most absurd fables, are related with malignant hatred. Even according to this miserable production, Christ performed miracles; not, however, by an art acquired in Egypt, as the Talmud and Celsus assert, but by pronouncing the holy name of Jehovah, which was a secret known only to the founder of Christianity.

In a very different sense, Christ has indeed made known the name of the only true and living God.

Among the better and more enlightened class of modern Jews, the opinion seems to be gaining ground that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah of the Gentiles, to be followed by the true Messiah of the Jews. But the majority of the Reform Jews are Deists, and substitute their nationality for religion.

64. The Heathen Writers.—The Greek and Roman writers of the first five centuries took, upon the whole, very little notice of Christ and Christianity, and were mostly quite ignorant of their character and history. Tacitus, Suetonius, the Younger Pliny, Epictetus, Lucian, Aristides, Galenus, Lampridius, Dio Cassius, Himerius, Libanius, Ammianus Marcellinus, Eunapius, and Zosimus, mention them incidentally, and generally with contempt or hatred. The only heathen authors who wrote special works against the Christian religion are Lucian (who assailed it at least indirectly), Celsus, Porphyry, Hierocles, and Julian the Apostate.

But even the incidental allusions of the former and the assaults of the latter contain much that tends to confirm the credibility of the gospel history and the miracles of Christ. Let us briefly sum up the chief references.

65. Tacitus, who lived in the second half of the first and the first quarter of the second century, in giving an account of the Neronian persecution of the Chris-

tians at Rome, which occurred A.D. 64, incidentally attests that Christ was put to death as a malefactor by Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius; that he was the founder of the Christian sect; that the latter took its rise in Judæa, and spread, in spite of the ignominious death of Christ, and the hatred and contempt it encountered throughout the empire, so that a vast multitude (*multitudo ingens*) of them were most cruelly put to death in the city of Rome. He clearly intimates that they were entirely innocent of the crime laid to their charge by Nero, who himself set the city on fire (to enjoy the spectacle of burning Troy), and wickedly made the Christians responsible for it.

Tacitus bears also valuable testimony, together with Josephus, from whom he mainly, though not exclusively, takes his account, to the fulfilment of Christ's prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, and the overthrow of the Jewish people.[44]

66. Pliny the Younger, a contemporary and friend of Tacitus and the Emperor Trajan, in his famous Letter to Trajan, about 107, bears testimony to the rapid spread of Christianity in Asia Minor at that time among all ranks of society; the general moral purity and steadfastness of its professors amid cruel persecution; their mode and time of worship; *their adoration of Christ as God;* their observance of a "stated day," which is undoubtedly Sunday; and other facts of importance in the early history of the Church. Trajan's rescript, in reply to Pliny's inquiry, furnishes evidence of the innocence of the Christians. He notices no charge against them except their disregard of the worship of the gods, and forbids them to be sought after.

67. Celsus, a Grecian eclectic philosopher of the second century, is the first heathen author who wrote an express work against Christianity. It bears the title *A True Discourse.* Origen, in his able and effective refutation, has faithfully preserved the principal portions of it in the au-

[44] In the fifth book of his *History.*

thor's own language. Celsus employs all the aids which the culture of his age afforded—the weapons of learning, philosophy, common sense, wit, sarcasm, and dramatic animation of style—to disprove and ridicule Christianity and its followers. He combines the hatred of Judaism and the contempt of heathenism, and anticipates most of the arguments and sophisms of the Deists and Naturalists of later times.

And yet even this able infidel assailant, who lived almost within hailing distance of the apostolic age, bears witness, as St. Chrysostom already remarked, to the antiquity of the apostolic writings and the main facts of the gospel history. He thus furnishes a strong argument against the modern mythical and legendary biographists of Jesus. Celsus refers to the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John; and makes, upon the whole, about eighty allusions to, or quotations from, the New Testament. He takes notice of Christ's birth from a virgin in a small village of Judæa; the adoration of the wise men from the East; the slaughter of the infants by order of Herod; the flight to Egypt, where he supposes Christ learned the charms of magicians; his residence in Nazareth; his baptism, and the descent of the Holy Spirit in the shape of a dove, and the voice from heaven; the election of his disciples; his friendship with publicans and other low people; his cures of the lame and the blind, and raising of the dead; the betrayal of Judas; the denial of Peter; the principal circumstances in the history of the passion and crucifixion; also the resurrection of Christ.

It is true, he perverts or abuses most of these facts; but, according to his own showing, they were then generally, and had always been, believed by the Christians. He does not deny the miracles of Jesus, but, like the Jews, he derives them from evil spirits, and makes Jesus a magician and impostor. He alludes also to some of the principal doctrines of the Christians, to their private assemblies for worship, and to the office of presbyters. He omits the

grosser charges of immorality, which he probably considered absurd and incredible.

68. **Lucian,** a brilliant but frivolous rhetorician of Syria, who died in Egypt or Greece, about A.D. 200, wrote indirectly against Christianity in his *Life of Peregrinus,* and treated it under disguise, as one of the many follies of the age, with the light weapons of wit and ridicule. Yet he never calls Christ an impostor, as Celsus did, but a crucified *sophist;* a term which he uses as often in a good sense as in a bad.

69. **Julian the Apostate,** Roman emperor from 361 to 363, the most gifted and the most bitter of all the ancient assailants of Christianity, endeavored, with the whole combined influence of his station, talent, and example, to restore idolatry throughout the Roman empire, but in vain. His reign passed away like the "baseless fabric of a vision, leaving no wreck behind," save the important lesson that ancient paganism was hopelessly extinct, and that no human power can arrest the triumphant march of Christianity.

In his work against the Christian religion, where he combined all former attacks, and infused into them his own sarcastic spirit, he says of Christ, as quoted by his opponent Cyril, Bishop of Alexandria, *Contr. Jul.:*

"Jesus, having persuaded a few among you [Galileans, as he contemptuously called the Christians], and those of the worst of men, has now been celebrated about three hundred years; having done nothing in his lifetime worthy of fame, unless any one thinks it a very great work to heal lame and blind people and exorcise demoniacs in the villages of Bethsaida and Bethany." [45]

70. **Spinoza.**—Born 1632; died 1677. Christ was the temple of God, because in him God has most fully revealed himself.—*Epistola 23.*

[45] *Contra Julian.,* lib. vi., p. 191. This is sufficiently bitter and contemptuous; and yet it concedes to Christ the power of working miracles; and these miracles, having all the highest moral and benevolent character, are an argument for the purity and divine mission of Christ's person.

71. **Jean Jacques Rousseau.**—This famous French philosopher and rhetorician was born in Gèneva, the city of Calvin, in 1712; and died, after a restless, changeful, and unhappy life, near Chantilly, in 1778. He did as much as any writer, Voltaire not excepted, to prepare the way for the French Revolution, and the consequent overthrow of the whole social order in France. His life is marked by a series of blunders, caprices, glaring inconsistencies, and violent changes from Calvinism to Romanism, from Romanism to infidelity, from infidelity to transient belief, from poverty and misery, persecution and exile, to glory and happiness, and back again to misery, from philanthropy to misanthropy, from sense to the very borders of insanity, —all illuminated by flashes of genius. He was one of the most eloquent and fascinating, but also one of the most paradoxical and dangerous, of writers. He viewed everything from his lively imagination, and wrote every line under the impulse of feeling and passion. His judgment was on the side of virtue and religion; but in his conduct he betrayed every principle he enjoined. He drew the most charming pictures of female loveliness, and yet he lived long in illegal intercourse, and at last married his servant,—a vulgar and ill-tempered woman. He rebuked the ladies of France for intrusting their children to nurses, and yet he placed his own in a foundling-hospital.

His remarkable testimony to Christ and the Gospels is the best thing he ever wrote, and will last the longest. It was written about A.D. 1760, and appeared in his work on education, which was condemned for its dangerous speculations on religion and morals by the Parliament of France, and caused his banishment from the kingdom.

"I will confess to you, that the majesty of the Scriptures strikes me with admiration, as the purity of the gospel has its influence on my heart. Peruse the works of our philosophers, with all their pomp of diction, how mean, how contemptible are they, compared with the Scriptures! Is it possible that a book, at once so simple and so sublime,

should be merely the work of man? Is it possible that the sacred personage whose history it contains should be himself a mere man? Do we find that he assumed the tone of an enthusiast or ambitious sectary? What sweetness, what purity in his manner! What an affecting gracefulness in his instructions! What sublimity in his maxims! What profound wisdom in his discourses! What presence of mind, what subtlety, what fitness, in his replies! How great the command over his passions! Where is the man, where the philosopher, who could so live and so die, without weakness, and without ostentation? When Plato describes his imaginary righteous man, loaded with all the punishments of guilt, yet meriting the highest rewards of virtue, he describes exactly the character of Jesus Christ; the resemblance is so striking, that all the Church Fathers perceived it. What prepossession, what blindness must it be to compare the son of Sophroniscus to the son of Mary! What an infinite disproportion there is between them! . . . The death of Socrates, peacefully philosophizing among friends, appears the most agreeable that one could wish: that of Jesus, expiring in agonies, abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that one could fear. Socrates, indeed, in receiving the cup of poison, blessed the weeping executioner who administered it; but Jesus, amidst excruciating tortures, prayed for his merciless tormentors.

" Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a God." [46]

72. Napoleon Bonaparte.—Napoleon the First grew up in the infidel atmosphere of the eighteenth century, and was all his life so much absorbed with schemes of military conquest and political dominion that he had no time, even if he had the inclination, to reflect seriously on the subject of religion. Ambition was the idol monster to which he

[46] *Emile ou de L'Education,* livre iv. (Profession de Foi du Vicaire Savoyard.) Œuvres complètes, Paris, 1839, tome iii., pp. 365-367.

sacrificed millions of human beings, and even his devoted wife, whom he ardently loved and admired. But he had too profound an intellect ever to be an atheist. He was constitutionally inclined to fatalism; and like his nephew, Napoleon III., he believed in his star. He knew that religion was an essential element in human nature, and the strongest pillar of public morals and social order. In his Egyptian campaign, it is said, he carried with him a New Testament along with the Koran, under the characteristic title, "Politics." It was from this political point of view that he restored the Roman Catholic Church in France (which the folly of the Revolution had swept away), and secured to the Protestants the liberty of public worship, but kept both subject to the secular power and his despotic will.

In his last will and testament, which was drawn up six years before his death, at Longwood, Island of St. Helena, he declares: "I die in the apostolic Roman religion, in the bosom of which I was born more than fifty years ago." But this is a conventional phrase in Roman Catholic countries. In 1819 he sent for two Italian priests,—the aged Abbé Buonavita, who had been chaplain to his mother at Elba and to the Princess Pauline at Rome; and the young Abbé Vignali, who was also a physician. He professed his assent and submission to the faith and discipline of the Catholic Christian religion, attended mass every Sunday, and received the sacrament of extreme unction before his death.

These facts do not justify the inference that Napoleon became a true Christian. His public and private life exhibit no trace of piety. His submission to the rites of the Roman Church on his death-bed is hardly sufficient to be construed into an act of genuine repentance, and may have been dictated in part by policy, or a prudent regard for his own reputation, the interests of his dynasty, and the public sentiment in France. He died amidst dreams and visions of war and victory. "France! Josephine! head of

the army!" were his last words,—a suitable summing-up of his life.

But I have no doubt that his *intellect* bowed before the majesty of Christ. Reasoning from the overpowering authority and dignity of Christ as a teacher, from the amazing result of his peaceful mission, and the imperishable nature of his kingdom as contrasted with the vanity of all human conquests and secular empires, he justly inferred that Christ was more than man, that he was truly divine, and that his Divinity is the key which unlocks the mysteries of Christianity. In this respect he went further than any of the witnesses in this collection, who stop with the concession of the unparalleled *human* greatness of Christ. The logical conclusion of the marvelous intellect of Napoleon, and his profound knowledge of men, may be fairly set over against the illogical denial of Christ's Divinity by inferior minds.

In view of all I can gather, I am inclined to believe that these religious conversations of Napoleon have been enlarged or modified in the recollection of reporters, but are authentic in substance; because they have the grandiloquent and egotistic manner of Napoleon, and are marked by that massive grandeur and granitelike simplicity of thought and style which characterize the best of his utterances. They are, moreover, quite consistent with the undeniable fact, that he expressed himself, both in his testament and on his death-bed, a believer in the Catholic Christian religion, which always taught the Divinity of Christ as a fundamental article of faith.

One day Napoleon, speaking of Christ, said to General Bertrand:

"I know men; and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires, and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity.

"Everything in him astonishes me. His spirit overawes me, and his will confounds me. . . . He is truly a being by himself. His ideas and his sentiments, the truth which he announces, his manner of convincing, are not explained either by human organization or by the nature of things.

"Alexander, Cæsar, Charlemagne, and myself founded empires. But on what did we rest the creations of our genius? Upon force. Jesus Christ alone founded his empire upon love; and, at this hour, millions of men would die for him.

"In every other existence but that of Christ, how many imperfections! Where is the character which has not yielded, vanquished by obstacles? Where is the individual who has never been governed by circumstances or places; who has never succumbed to the influences of the times; who has never compounded with any customs or passions? From the first day to the last he is the same, always the same; majestic and simple; infinitely firm, and infinitely gentle.

"Truth should embrace the universe. Such is Christianity,—the only religion which destroys sectional prejudices; the only one which proclaims the unity and the absolute brotherhood of the whole human family; the only one which is purely spiritual; in fine, the only one which assigns to all, without distinction, for a true country, the bosom of the Creator, God. Christ proved that he was the Son of the Eternal by his disregard of time. All his doctrines signify one only and the same thing,—eternity."

73. **Goethe**, the most universal and highly cultivated of poets, was probably, like Napoleon, theoretically convinced of the divinity of Christ, but too much a man of the world to give himself any serious practical concern about it. In his youth he was, through his friendship with Jung, Stilling, Lavater, and Fräulein von Klettenberg (whose "Confessions of a Beautiful Soul" he incorporated in his *Wilhelm Meister*), not far from the kingdom of Christ, but

never surrendered himself to its spiritual power. After his journey to Italy he broke off these Christian associations, and declined, with cold politeness, the well-meant monitions of noble Christian friends such as the Countess of Stolberg.

An interesting selection of deep Christian thoughts might be made from his *Faust,* and other works; but his poetic effusions do not always express his personal convictions. We present here only his direct testimony to the truth of the gospel and the superhuman nature of Christ from the last years of his life.

"I consider the Gospels to be thoroughly genuine; for in them there is the effective reflection of a sublimity which emanated from the *Person of Christ;* and this is as *Divine* as ever the Divine appeared on earth." [47]

Eleven days before his death Goethe confessed to Eckermann that he held a rational belief in positive Christianity. One of his last utterances, which we may call his dying confession on the subject of religion, is very remarkable:

"We hardly know how much we are indebted to Luther and the Reformation in general. No matter how much the human mind may progress in intellectual culture, in the science of nature, in breadth and depth, *it will never be able to rise above the elevation and moral culture of Christianity as it shines in the Gospels."*

74. Thomas Carlyle.—This powerful writer is an open worshiper of human heroes like Cromwell, Frederick the Great, Luther, and John Knox, but also a silent worshiper of the Divine hero, whom he was taught to love and adore on the knees of a pious Scotch mother.

He calls Jesus of Nazareth "our divinest symbol. Higher has the human thought not yet reached. A symbol of quite perennial, infinite character; whose significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into, and anew made manifest." [48]

[47] *Conversations with Eckermann* (March 11, 1832).
[48] *Sartor Resartus,* bk. iii., chap. 3.

75. William Ellery Channing.—Born 1780; died 1842. We are far from placing Dr. Channing, the great leader of American Unitarianism, and one of the brightest ornaments of American literature, in the company of skeptics or unbelievers. Although heterodox on the vital articles of the Holy Trinity and the Atonement, he was, in his way, a worshiper of Jesus, and exhibited the power of his holy example in his lovely character and written works. He was deeply penetrated with the ethical spirit of Christianity, more so than many of his orthodox opponents. We select a passage from his admirable *Sermons,* which bear strong testimony to the perfection of Christ's character, and which consistently would lead far beyond the Socinian or Unitarian Christology which he advocated. The italics are our own:

"This Jesus lived with men: with the consciousness of unutterable majesty, he joined a lowliness, gentleness, humanity, and sympathy which have no example in human history. I ask you to contemplate this wonderful union. In proportion to the superiority of Jesus to all around him, was the intimacy, the brotherly love, with which he bound himself to them. I maintain that this is *a character wholly remote from human conception.* To imagine it to be the production of imposture or enthusiasm, shows a strange unsoundness of mind. I contemplate it with a veneration second only to the profound awe with which I look up to God. It bears no mark of human invention. It was real. It belonged to, and it manifested, the beloved Son of God. . . .

"Here I pause; and indeed I know not what can be added to heighten the wonder, reverence, and love which are due to Jesus. When I consider him, not only as possessed with the consciousness of an unexampled and unbounded majesty, but as recognizing a kindred nature in human beings, and living and dying to raise them to a participation of his divine glories; and when I see him, under these views, allying himself to men by the tenderest ties,

embracing them with a spirit of humanity, which no insult, injury, or pain could for a moment repel or overpower,—I am filled with wonder as well as reverence and love. I feel that this character is not of human invention; that it was not assumed through fraud, or struck out by enthusiasm; for it is infinitely above their reach. When I add this character of Jesus to the other evidences of his religion, it gives, to what before seemed so strong, a new and a vast accession of strength: I feel as if I could not be deceived. *The Gospels must be true: they were drawn from a living original; they were founded on reality.* The character of Jesus is not a fiction: *he was what he claimed to be, and what his followers attested.* Nor is this all. Jesus not only *was, he is still, the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.* He exists now: he has entered that heaven to which he always looked forward on earth. There he lives and reigns. With a clear, calm faith, I see him in that state of glory; and I confidently expect, at no distant period, to see him face to face. We have, indeed, no absent friend whom we shall so surely meet. Let us, then, my hearers, by imitation of his virtues and obedience to his word, prepare ourselves to join him in those pure mansions, where he is surrounding himself with the good and pure of our race, and will communicate to them for ever his own spirit, power, and joy." [49]

76. David Friedrich Strauss.—"If in Jesus the union of the self-consciousness with the consciousness of God has been real, and expressed not only in words, but actually revealed in all the conditions of his life, he represents within the religious sphere the highest point, beyond which posterity cannot go; yea, whom it cannot even equal, inasmuch as every one who hereafter should climb the same height, could only do it with the help of Jesus, who first attained it. As little as humanity will ever be without religion, as little will it be without Christ; for to

[49] From the sermon on the *Character of Christ* (on Matt. 17: 5), in Dr. Channing's *Works*, Boston, 1848, vol. iv., pp. 1-29.

have religion without Christ would be as absurd as to enjoy poetry without regard to Homer or Shakespeare. And this Christ, as far as he is inseparable from the highest style of religion, is *historical,* not mythical; is an *individual,* no mere symbol. To the historical person of Christ belongs all in his life that exhibits his religious perfection, his discourses, his moral action, and his passion. . . . *He remains the highest model of religion within the reach of our thought; and no perfect piety is possible without his presence in the heart.*" [50]

77. Theodore Parker.—Born 1810; died 1860, represents the left or radical wing of American Unitarianism, as Channing represents the right or conservative wing. He adopted, with some exceptions, the mythical theory of Dr. Strauss. He speaks of "limitations of Jesus;" says that Jesus "shared the erroneous notions of the times respecting devils, possessions, and demonology in general;" that he "was mistaken in his interpretation of the Old Testament;" that he was an "enthusiast," at least to some extent,—all of which, however, he regards as mere trifles, not affecting in the least his moral and religious character. Then he finds fault with Jesus for denouncing his opponents in no measured terms, calling the Pharisees "hypocrites," and "children of the devil." "We cannot tell how far the historians have added to the fierceness of this invective; but the general fact must probably remain, that he did not use courteous speech." But that, he thinks, considering the youth of the man, was a very venial error, to make the worst of it. This is what Parker calls "the negative side, or the limitations of Jesus." He then considers the "positive side, or the excellences of Jesus." We make the following extracts:

"In estimating the character of Jesus, it must be remembered that he died at an age when man has not reached his fullest vigor. The great works of creative intellect, the

[50] From his essay, *Vergängliches und Bleibendes im Christenthum,* 1838, Freihafen, 3tes Heft, p. 47.

maturest products of man, all the deep and settled plans of reforming the world, come from a period when experience gives a wider field as the basis of hope. Socrates was but an embryo sage till long after the age of Jesus: poems, and philosophies that live, come at a later date. Now, here we see a young man, but little more than thirty years old, with no advantage of position; the son and companion of rude people; born in a town whose inhabitants were wicked to a proverb; of a nation, above all others distinguished for their superstition, for national pride, exaltation of themselves, and contempt for all others; in an age of singular corruption, when the substance of religion had faded out from the mind of its anointed ministers, and sin had spread wide among a people turbulent, oppressed, and down-trodden. A man ridiculed for his lack of knowledge, in this nation of forms, of hypocritical priests, and corrupt people, falls back on simple morality, simple religion; unites in himself the sublimest precepts and divinest practices, thus more than realizing the dream of prophets and sages; rises free from all prejudice of his age, nation, or sect; gives free range to the Spirit of God in his breast; sets aside the law, sacred and time-honored as it was, its forms, its sacrifice, its temple, and its priests; puts away the doctors of the law, subtle, learned, irrefragable, and pours out a doctrine beautiful as the light, sublime as heaven, and true as God. The philosophers, the poets, the prophets, the rabbis,—he rises above them all. Yet Nazareth was no Athens, where philosophy breathed in the circumambient air: it had neither Porch nor Lyceum; not even a school of the prophets. There is God in the heart of this youth. . . .

"That mightiest heart that ever beat, stirred by the Spirit of God, how it wrought in his bosom! What words of rebuke, of comfort, counsel, admonition, promise, hope, did he pour out! words that stir the soul as summer dews call up the faint and sickly grass. What profound instruction in his proverbs and discourses! what wisdom in his homely sayings, so rich with Jewish life! what deep

divinity of soul in his prayers, his action, sympathy, resignation! . . .

"Try him as we try other teachers. They deliver their word; find a few waiting for the consolation, who accept the new tidings, follow the new method, and soon go beyond their teacher, though less mighty minds than he. Such is the case with each founder of a school of philosophy, each sect in religion. Though humble men, we see what Socrates and Luther never saw. But eighteen centuries have passed since the tide of humanity rose so high in Jesus: what man, what sect, what church, has mastered his thought, comprehended his method, and so fully applied it to life? Let the world answer in its cry of anguish. Men have parted his raiment among them, cast lots for his seamless coat; but that spirit which toiled so manfully in a world of sin and death, which died and suffered and overcame the world,—is that found, possessed, understood? Nay, is it sought for and recommended by any of our churches?"[51]

78. John Stuart Mill.—Born 1806; died 1873. "Above all, the most valuable part of the effect upon the character which Christianity has produced by holding up in a Divine Person a standard of excellence and a model for imitation, is available even to the absolute unbeliever, and can never more be lost to humanity. For it is Christ, rather than God, whom Christianity has held up to believers as the pattern of perfection for humanity. It is the God incarnate, more than the God of the Jews or of nature, who being idealized has taken so great and salutary a hold on the modern mind. And whatever else may be taken away from us by rational criticism, Christ is still left; a unique figure, not more unlike all his precursors than all his followers, even those who had the direct benefit of his personal teaching. It is of no use to say that Christ as exhibited in the Gospels is not historical, and that we know not how

[51] From *A Discourse of Matters Pertaining to Religion.* Third ed. Boston, 1847, pp. 275-287.

much of what is admirable has been superadded by the tradition of his followers. The tradition of followers suffices to insert any number of marvels, and may have inserted all the miracles which he is reputed to have wrought. But who among his disciples or among their proselytes was capable of inventing the saying ascribed to Jesus, or imagining the life and character revealed in the Gospels? Certainly not the fishermen of Galilee; as certainly not St. Paul, whose character and idiosyncrasies were of a totally different sort; still less the early Christian writers, in whom nothing is more evident than that the good which was in them was all derived, as they always professed that it was derived, from the higher source." [52]

79. **Ernest Renan.**—" Jesus cannot belong exclusively to those who call themselves his disciples. He is the common honor of all who bear a human heart. His glory consists not in being banished from history: we render him a truer worship by showing that *all history is incomprehensible without him.* . . .

" Repose now in thy glory, noble founder! Thy work is finished; thy divinity is established. Fear no more to see the edifice of thy labors fall by any fault. Henceforth, beyond the reach of frailty, thou shalt witness, from the heights of divine peace, the infinite results of thy acts. At the price of a few hours of suffering, which did not even reach thy grand soul, thou hast bought the most complete immortality. For thousands of years the world will defend thee! Banner of our contests, thou shalt be the standard about which the hottest battle will be given. A thousand times more alive, a thousand times more beloved since

[52] From his essay on *Theism* completed shortly before his death, and published, 1874, with two other essays under the title, *Three Essays on Religion* (Am. ed. by Holt, p. 253). In this essay Mill unsettles all the arguments for the existence of God and the immortality of the soul, but winds up with the foregoing testimony to Christ. He said of himself that he never had any religious belief, but he made an idol of his wife, especially after her death. We have here his last utterance.

thy death than during thy passage here below, thou shalt become the corner-stone of humanity so entirely, that to tear thy name from this world would be to rend it to its foundations. Between thee and God there will be no longer any distinction. Complete conqueror of death, take possession of thy kingdom; whither shall follow thee, by the royal road which thou hast traced, ages of worshipers. . . .

"Whatever may be the surprises of the future, Jesus will never be surpassed. His worship will grow young without ceasing; his legend will call forth tears without end; his sufferings will melt the noblest hearts; all ages will proclaim, that, among the sons of men, there is none born greater than Jesus." [53]

80. W. E. H. Lecky.—Born 1838; died 1903. "If Christianity was remarkable for its appeals to the selfish or interested side of our nature, it was far more remarkable for the empire it attained over disinterested enthusiasm. The Platonist exhorted men to imitate God; the Stoic, to follow reason; the Christian, to the love of Christ. The later Stoics had often united their notions of excellence in an ideal sage, and Epictetus had even urged his disciples to set before them some man of surpassing excellence, and to imagine him continually near them; but the utmost the Stoic ideal could become was a model for imitation, and the admiration it inspired could never deepen into affection.

"It was reserved for Christianity to present to the world an ideal character, which through all the changes of eighteen centuries has inspired the hearts of men with an impassioned love, has shown itself capable of acting on all ages, nations, temperaments, and conditions, has been not only the highest pattern of virtue, but the strongest incentive to its practice, and has exercised so deep an influence that it may be truly said that *the simple record of three*

[53] From the *Vie de Jésus*, par E. Renan, membre de l'Institut. Septième édition. Paris, 1864. English translation by Charles Edwin Wilbour. New York, 1864, pp. 50, 303, 376.

short years of active life has done more to regenerate and to soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers and all the exhortations of moralists.

"This has indeed been the wellspring of whatever is best and purest in the Christian life. Amid all the sins and failings, amid all the priestcraft and persecution and fanaticism that have defaced the church, it has preserved, in the character and example of its Founder, an enduring principle of regeneration. Perfect love knows no rights. It creates a boundless, uncalculating self-abnegation that transforms the character, and is the parent of every virtue. Side by side with the terrorism and the superstitions of dogmatism, there have ever existed in Christianity those who would echo the wish of St. Theresa, that she could blot out both heaven and hell, to serve God for himself alone; and the power of the love of Christ has been displayed alike in the most heroic pages of Christian martyrdom, in the most pathetic pages of Christian resignation, in the tenderest pages of Christian charity. It was shown by the martyrs who sank beneath the fangs of wild beasts, extending to the last moment their arms in the form of the cross they loved; who ordered their chains to be buried with them as the insignia of their warfare; who looked with joy upon their ghastly wounds, because they had been received for Christ; who welcomed death as the bridegroom welcomes the bride, because it would bring them near to him." [54]

81. **"Supernatural Religion."** [55]—"It must be admitted that Christian ethics were not in their details either new or original. The precepts which distinguish the sys-

[54] From his *History of European Morals* (New York Ed.), vol. ii., pp. 9, 10.

[55] The anonymous author of this work reproduces in English the most advanced German and Dutch Rationalism of the Tübingen and Leyden schools, and endeavors to divest Christianity of all its supernatural elements, explaining them away as the after-growth of the fervid imagination of the East. Yet he is forced to admit that the historical Christ represents in doctrine and life the highest attainable summit of moral purity and perfection.

tem may be found separately in early religions, in ancient philosophies, and in the utterances of the great poets and seers of Israel. The teaching of Jesus, however, carried morality to the sublimest point attained, or even attainable, by humanity. The influence of his spiritual religion has been rendered doubly great by the unparalleled purity and elevation of his own character. Surpassing in his sublime simplicity and earnestness the moral grandeur of Sakya Muni, and putting to the blush the sometimes sullied, though generally admirable, teaching of Socrates and Plato, and the whole round of Greek philosophers, he presented the rare spectacle of a life, so far as we can estimate it, uniformly noble and consistent with his own lofty principles, so that the 'imitation of Christ' has become almost the final word in the preaching of his religion, and must continue to be one of the most powerful elements of its permanence. His system might not be new, but it was in a high sense the perfect development of natural morality, and it was final in this respect among others, that, superseding codes of law and elaborate rules of life, it confined itself to two fundamental principles: Love to God and love to man. While all previous systems had merely sought to purify the stream, it demanded the purification of the fountain. It placed the evil thought on a par with the evil action. Such morality, based upon the intelligent and earnest acceptance of divine law, and perfect recognition of the brotherhood of man, is the highest conceivable by humanity, and although its power and influence must augment with the increase of enlightenment, it is itself beyond development, consisting as it does of principles unlimited in their range and inexhaustible in their application. Its perfect realization is that extinction of rebellious personal opposition to divine order, and the attainment of perfect harmony with the will of God." [56]

[56] From *Supernatural Religion: An Inquiry into the Relation of Divine Revelation.* Sixth ed., London, 1875-79, vol. ii., pp. 487, 488.

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